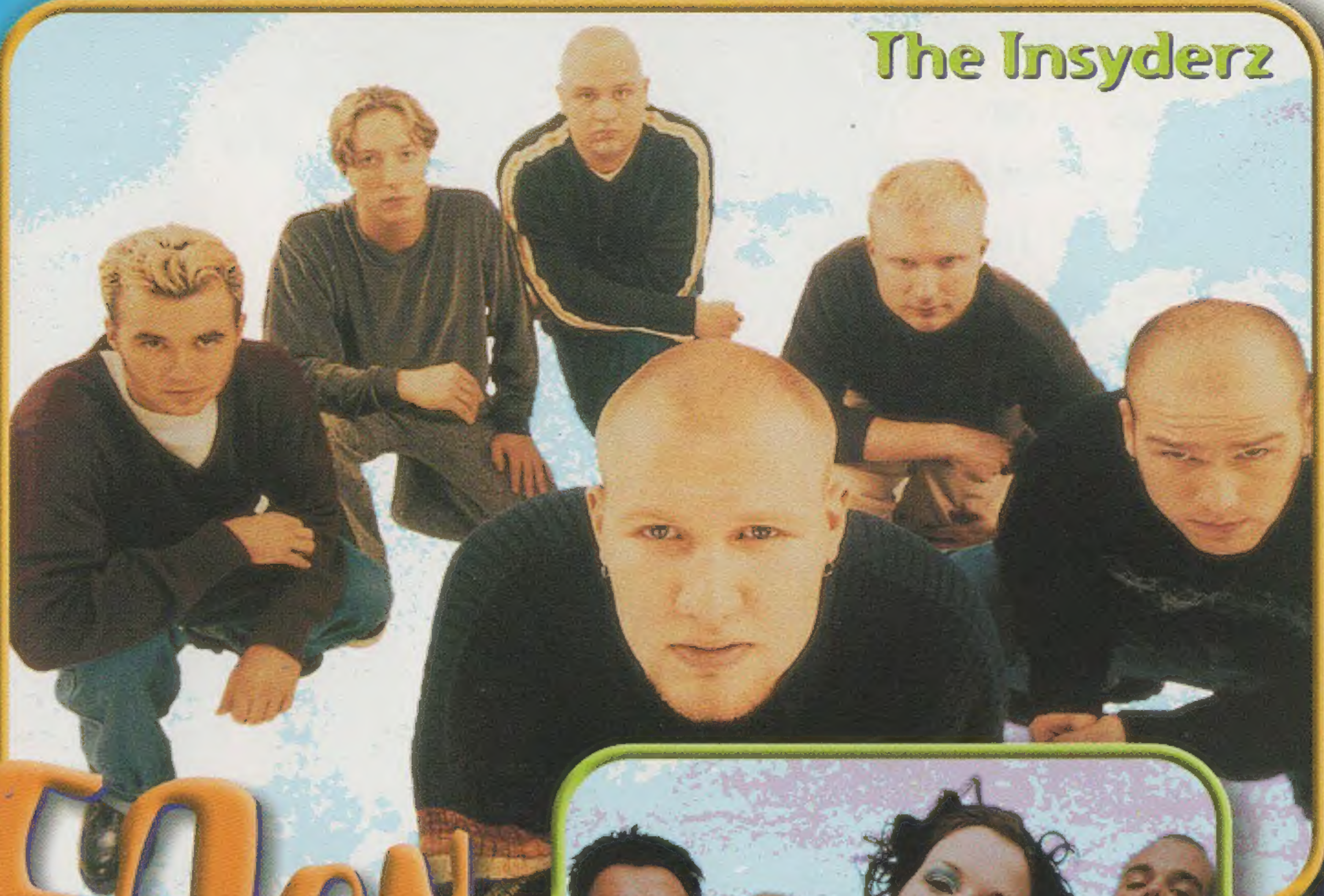


modern music on cue

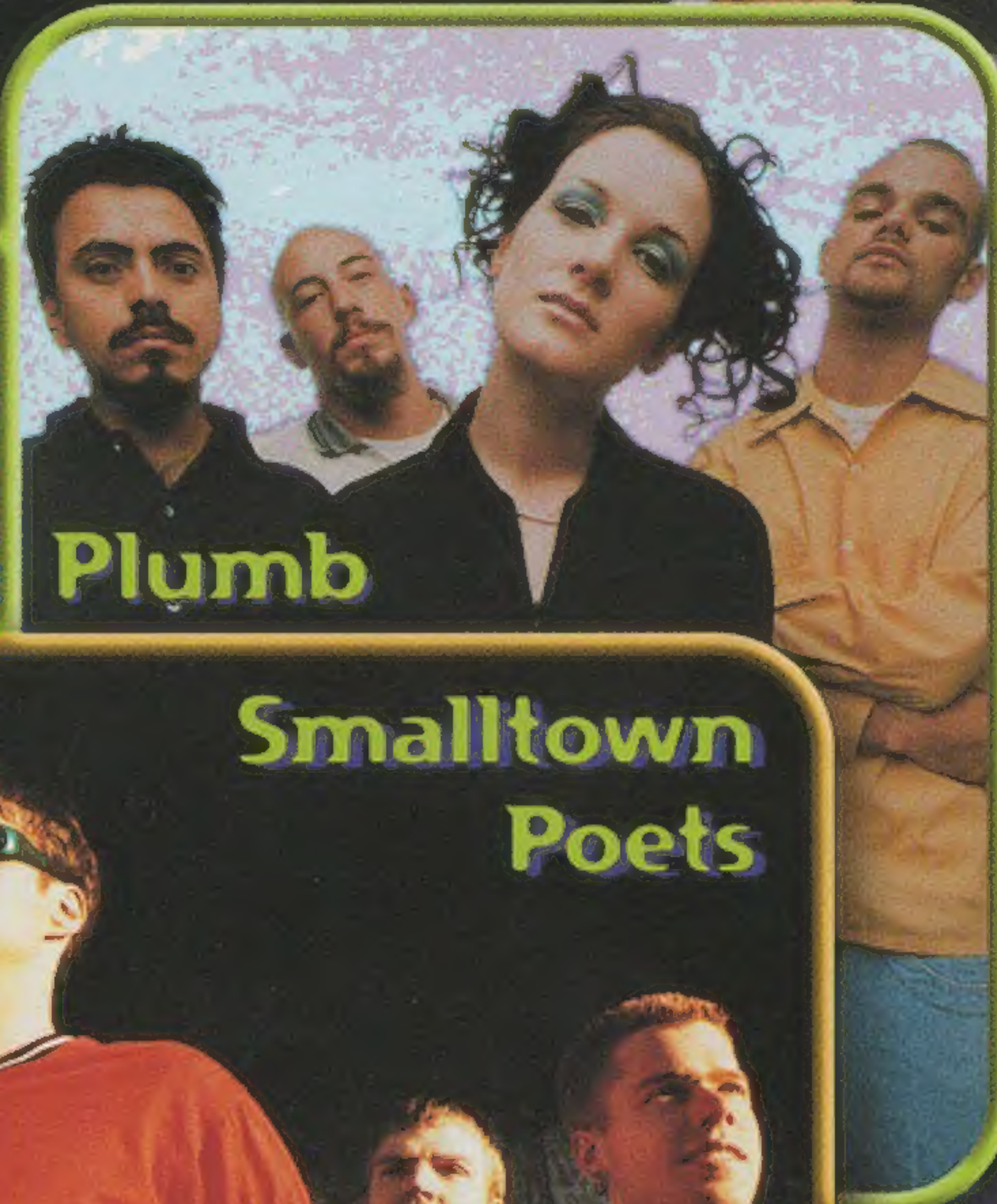
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HOOKED ON SURFONIC

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The Insyderz



Plumb



Smalltown
Poets



All Star United

Also In This Issue

The [Rap] Report

Kosmos Express

Steve Taylor

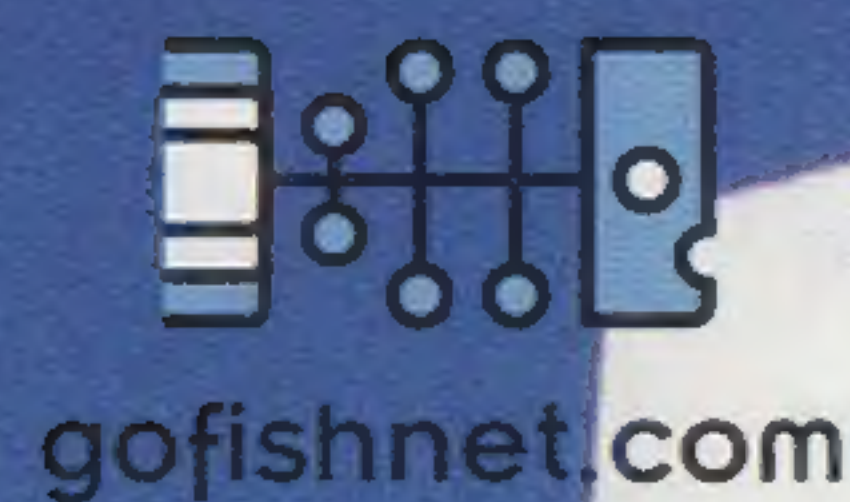
This Train

The W's

july/august 1998



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- Nov. 12 - Madison Theater - Peoria, IL
- Nov. 13 - Sonshine Church - Grand Rapids, MI
- Nov. 14 - Masonic Temple - Detroit, MI
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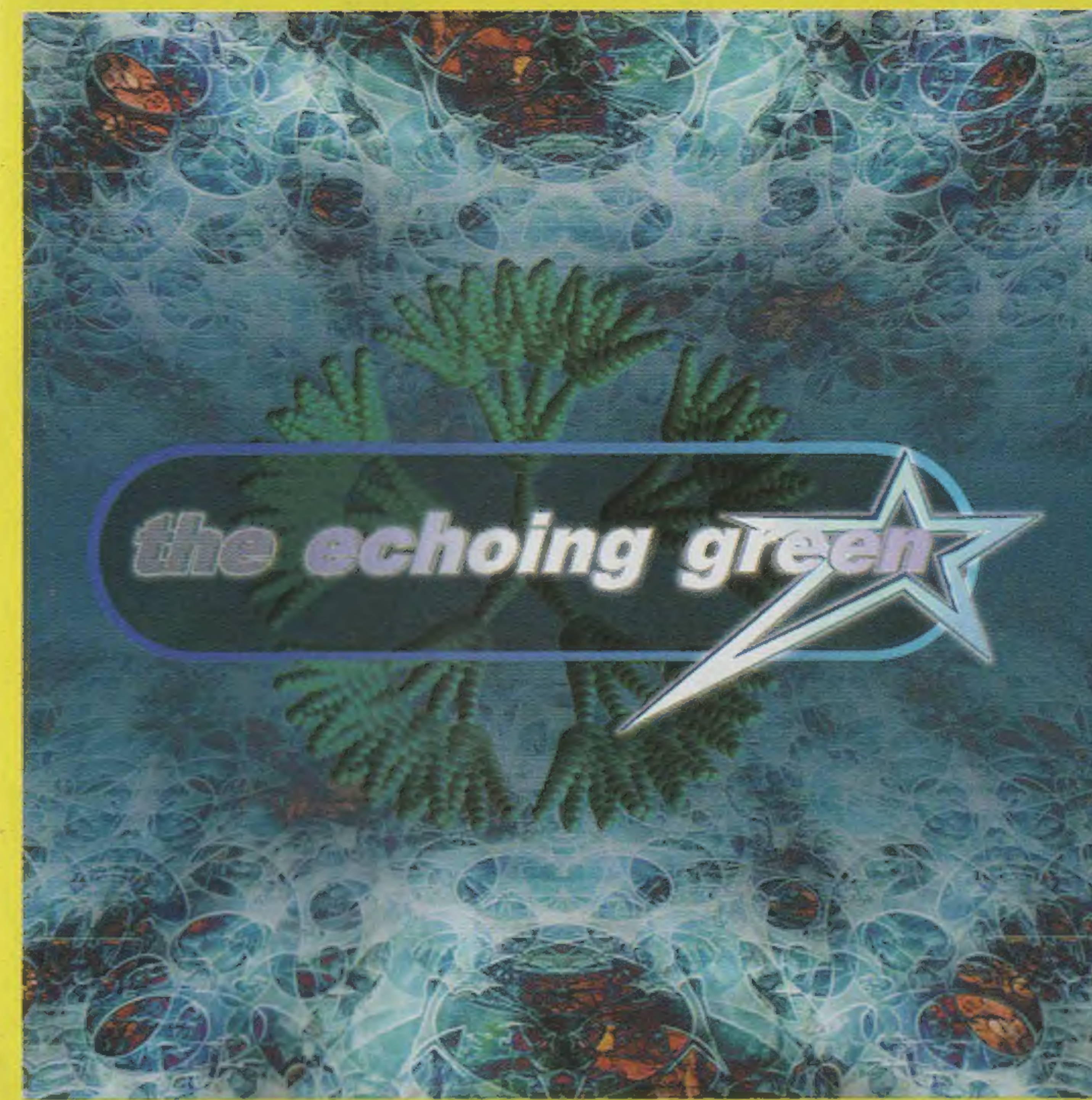
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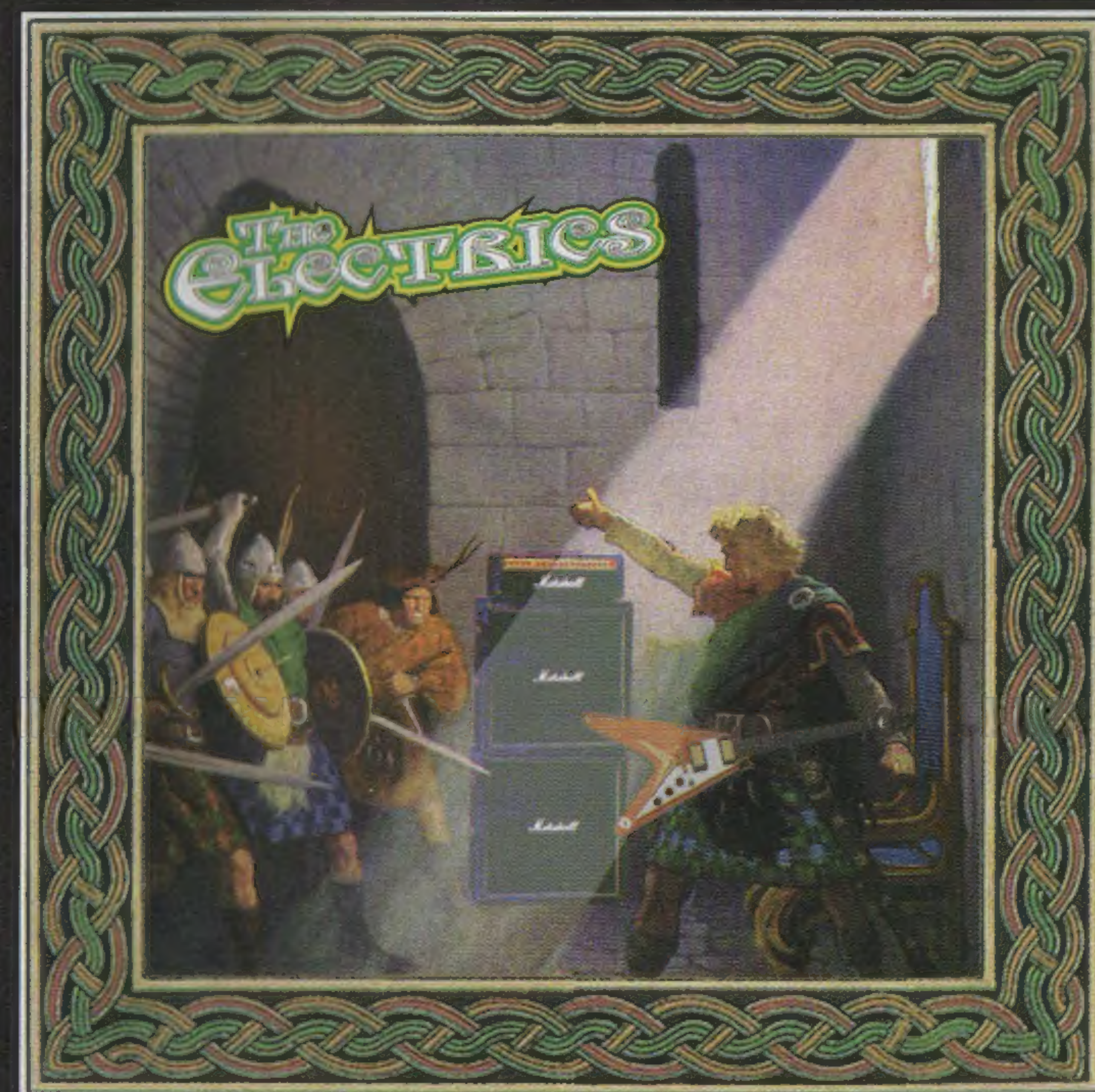
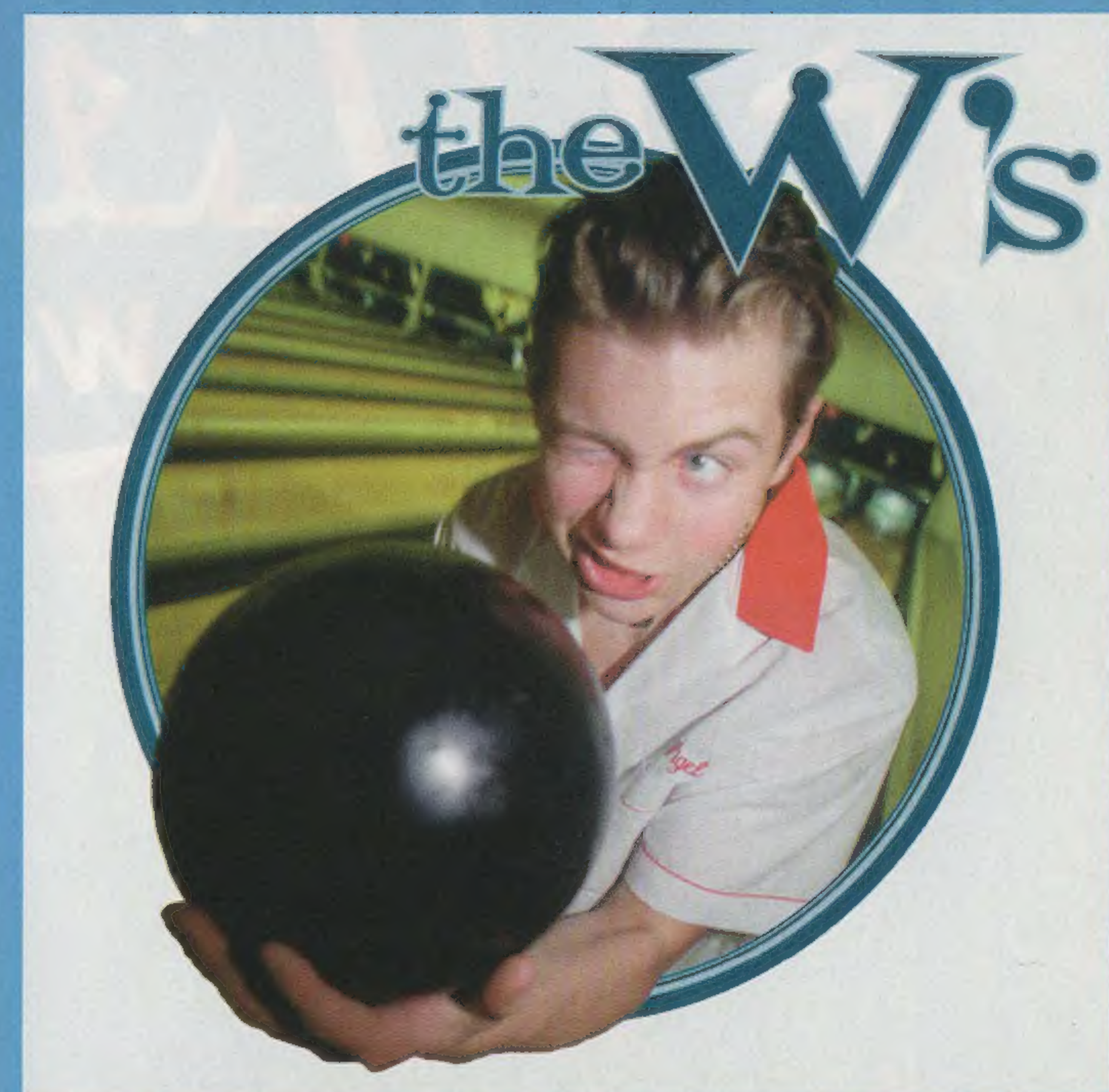
THE ECHOING GREEN 6-16-98

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Rick Altizer
Silage

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10. Last Day Of Summer
11. The Net
12. Pay For Surf
13. Into The Deep
14. The Sun Comes Out Again
15. Endless Summer #2
16. Caught Inside

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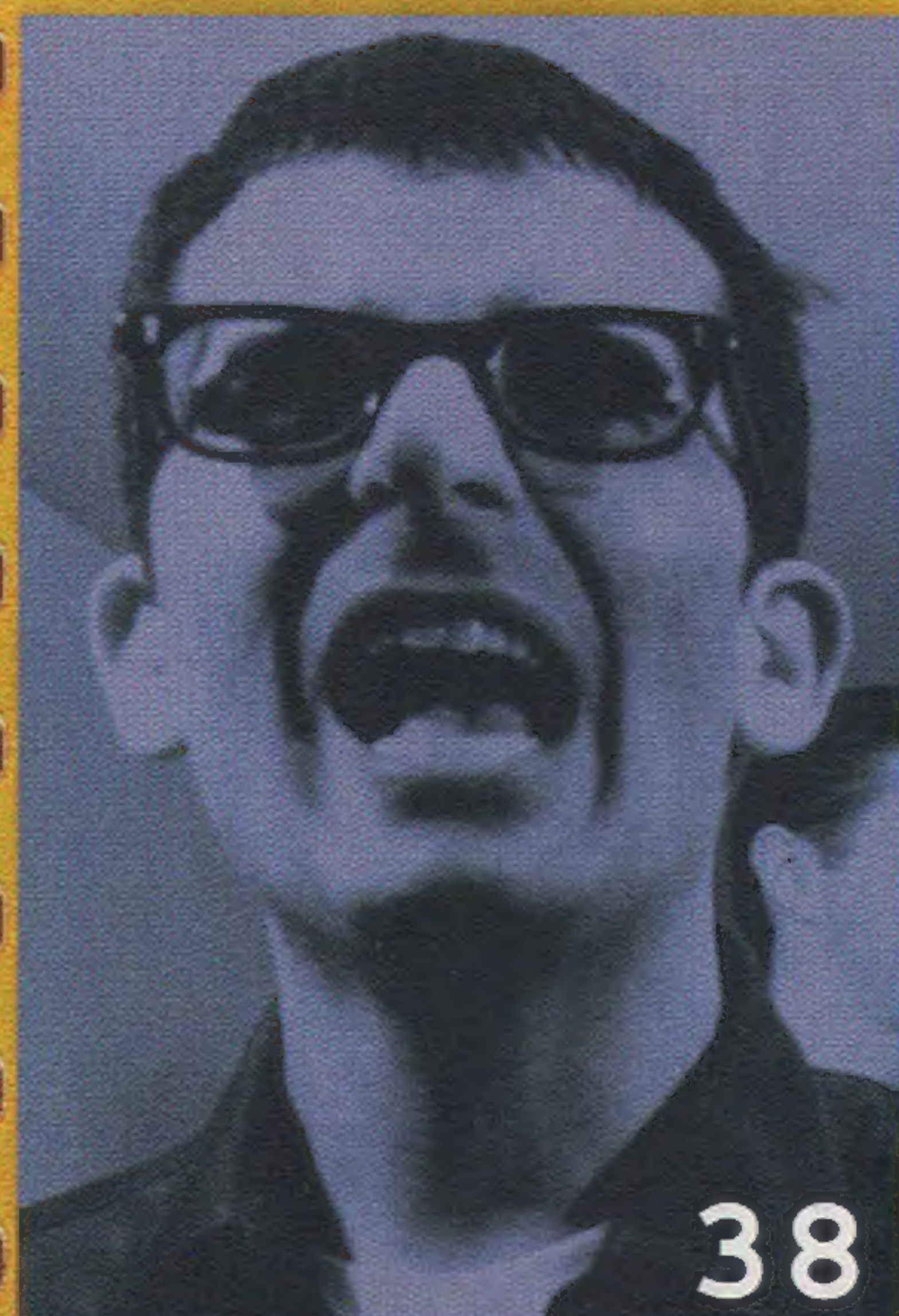
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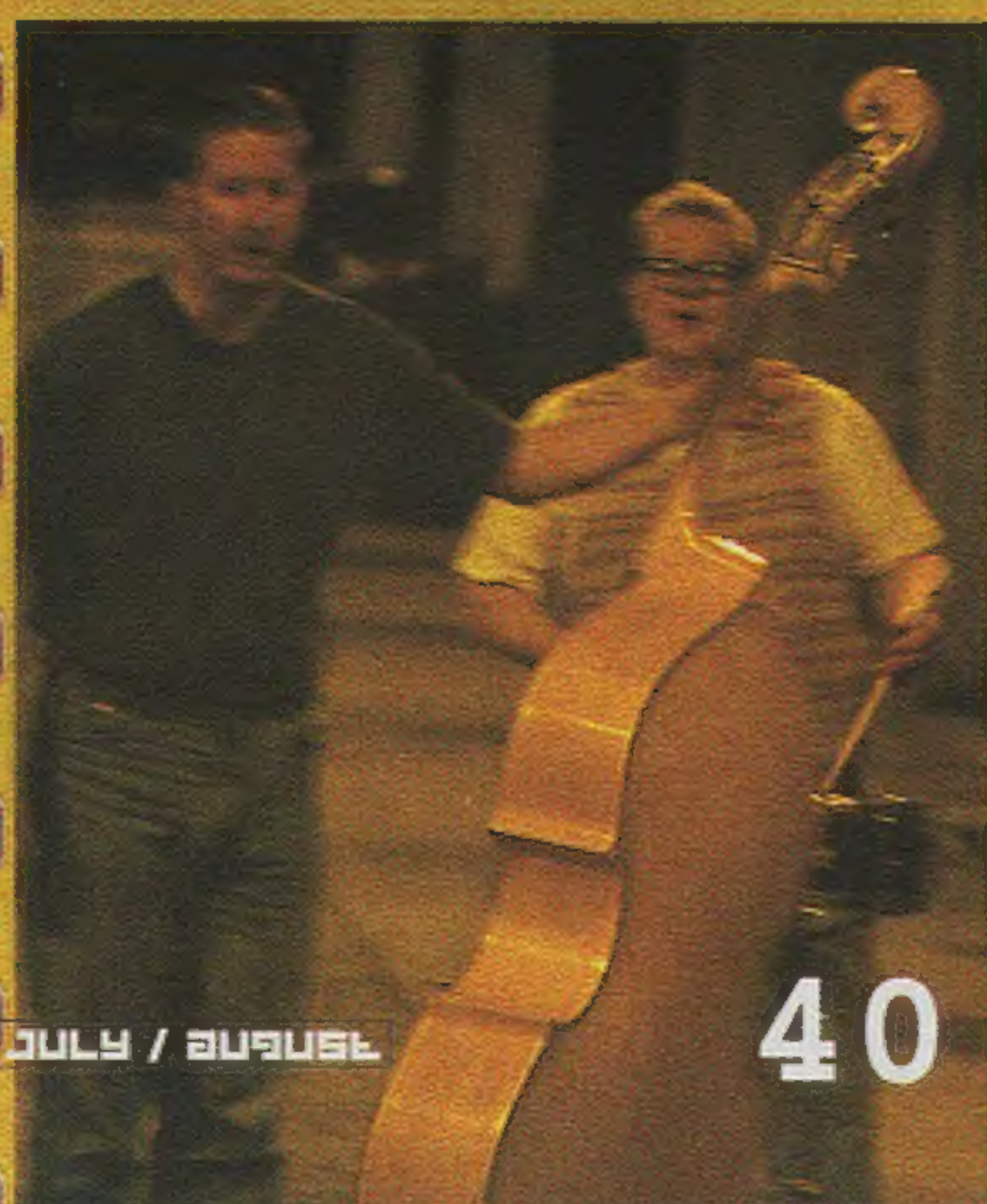
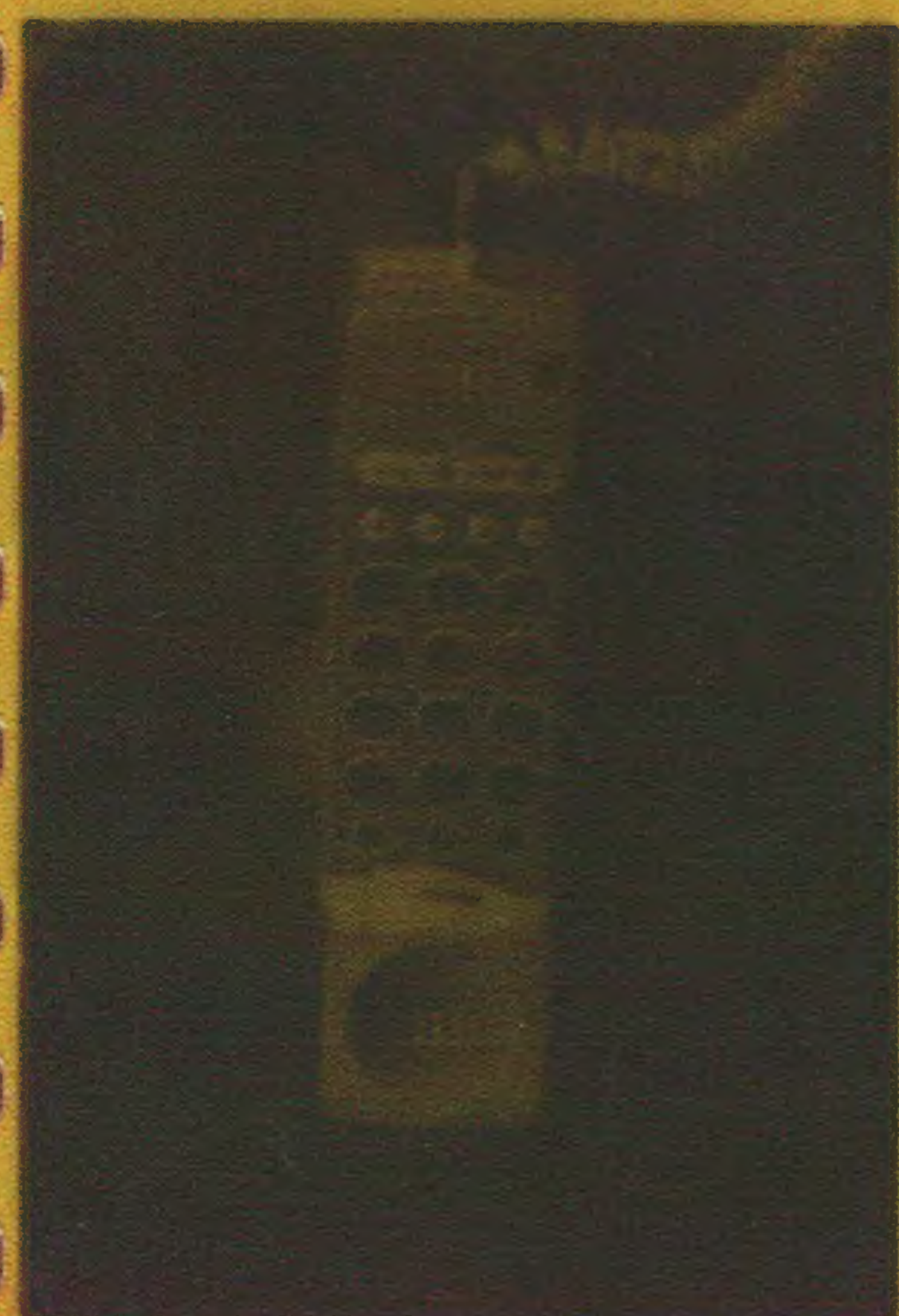
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- 3. Second-Chance Drawing.** There will be no second chance drawing for any of the prizes. Any prizes not claimed by March 15, 1999 will not be awarded.
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- 7. Sweepstakes sponsored by Organic Records/Pamplin Music.**

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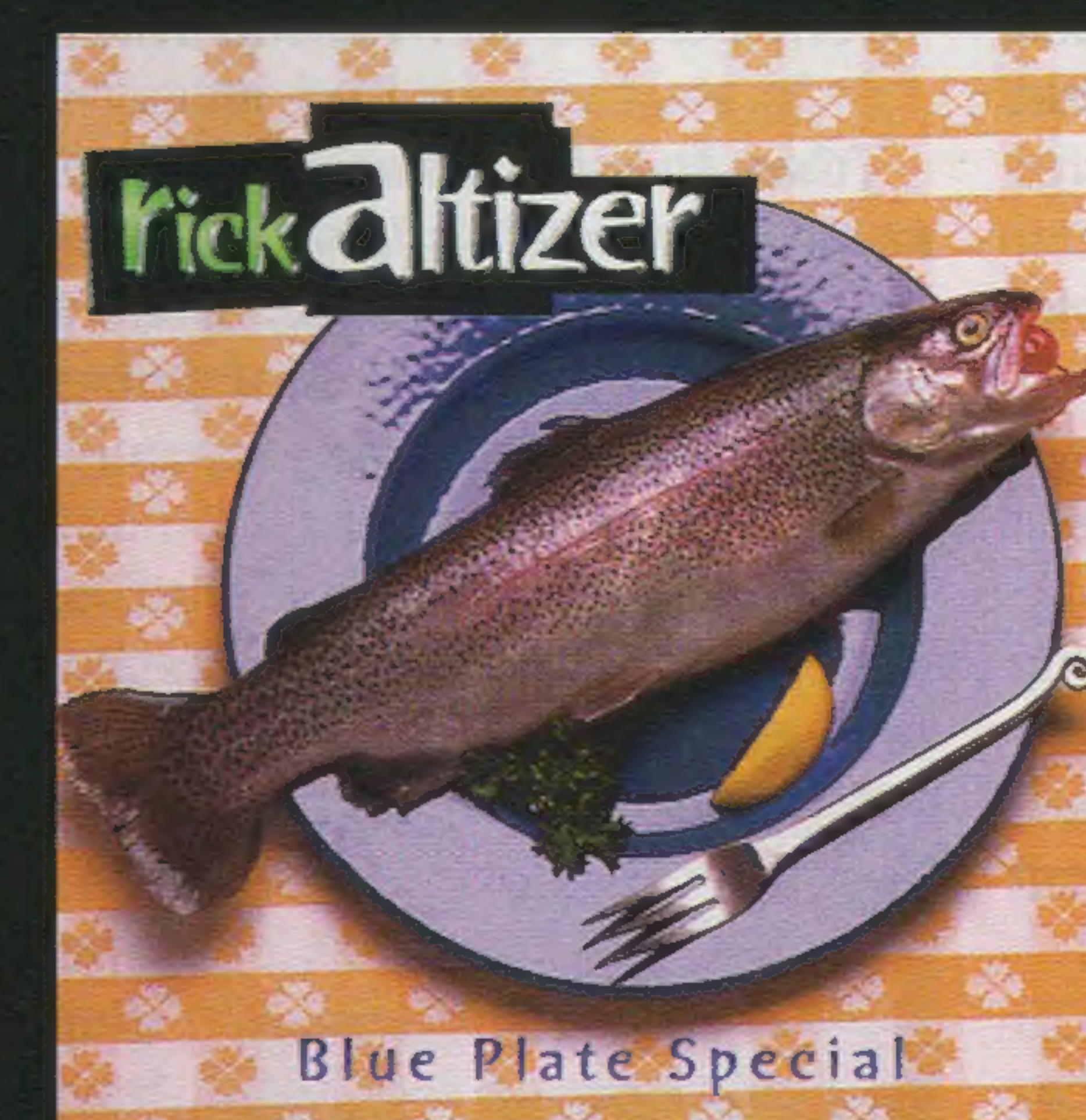
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*results of surveys on how many people have eaten Blue Plate Specials since the term's inception in 1992. This is a perfect example of useless information available on the internet. Since you read this much, you might as well hear about Rick Altizer - wacky, guitar driven rock with a heart. Buy some today!

Hey Feedback Boy,

We find your responses to letters highly entertaining. Dude, you should like write a book. We wanted to send you one of our duct tape wallets but postage and handling is a little too spendy and our paper routes just don't cut it. Anyways, you're the man—keep up the good work.

Katy, Jesse and Alli
via the Internet

[Actually, we prefer "Feedback Person."]

I love 7ball! I love ska! I love Taco Bell (Yo quiero Taco Bell)! Your comments at the end of letters are one of the highlights of the mag ("jalapenos ... mmm ... jalapenos"). You cover music we love, and you have contests! Now some things you should improve: more pages, more often (say, monthly, weekly, daily, bi-hourly, hourly, minutely, secondly, etc.). Also, I am in no way shape or form connected with Taco Bell.

Jacob
via the Internet

I know you've probably heard this a whole lot but you guys rawk! Thanx so much for all the kewl articles and info, but—Who the heck writes all the little things in parentheses after the letters? You've just gotta tell me (it's killing me)!

Abbey Gardner
via the Internet

[Our answers are written by a team of Viennese specialists. Why do you ask?]



I commend you guys for putting

together such an awesome product. I can sense a true sincerity in the articles, from both the bands' quotes and the writers' points of view. I also love the quick-wit replies you add to the letters. I don't know the denominational background of 7ball, but God is doing a great work through you.

Chris Lyons
via the Internet

Upon reading the "letters to 7ball" in your Nov/Dec issue (#15), I was a bit put out by the attitude of a writer (Jairemi Krommendyk). First of all, his opinion that you guys never print negative letters is quite misguided. If that were true, why did you give him the entire page for his letter? Secondly, how could he lump The Supertones into a secular category just because they've played shows with secular bands? The content of their shows and their ministry didn't change—it's an opportunity to reach a crowd you may not otherwise. His threat to refuse to read 7ball because of your layout in one issue is unjustified. You guys fill what would be a real void in the music scene. I will always be a loyal reader! Would it be possible to see an article with Slick Shoes in an upcoming mag?

Jake Mesler
via the Internet

[Gee, thanks, Jake ... but I don't know if "always" is long enough for us. Try harder. Maybe it'll inspire you to know we have Slick Shoes on tap for an issue very soon.]

I was excited to read "The Ska Report" in your May/June issue. I just wanted to clear some stuff up



for those who may have been confused.

The Israelites are not a "ska-influenced" band; they are a real ska band. FIF & The Supertones are ska-based. Ska has an awesome history behind it and I would encourage everyone to

read up on it.

Mike Brian Patterson
via the Internet

I was walking in a store the other day and I saw BTR on the cover [Feb/Mar]. They are like my favorite group in the world. I like the way you have new groups and the new CDs. Keep up the good work.

Brian
via the Internet

Your mag is sooooo cool! I wish it could come out every month! Your CDs rock, too. Christian Ergueta from Ghoti Hook is one of the nicest guys ever (please print this in your mag)!

Sarah
Floydada, TX

Thank you very much for publishing your magazine for teens. I like secular ska and punk, but ever since I started reading your magazine, I've started listening to Christian ska and punk.

Courtney
Walsh
via the Internet



I am a 30-year-old dude who has been listening to Christian music since 1986. Back then,

I would go to my local store and think, "There just isn't that much cool Christian music." Now, I go to the same store, and feel overwhelmed. 7ball has been helpful in sorting through the plethora of CDs. Keep up the good work!

Ryan S. Buckman
Citrus Heights, CA

P.S. I always wanted to use the word "plethora" in a letter! Please don't edit it out. "Plethora" means "an abundance," or simply, "a lot" (the definition is for your readers, not you).

[I wish more letters came with their own glossary.]

I'm a 17-year-old privately-taught student who's hooked on your magazine. My goal after graduation is to pursue my dream as a record producer. I like your



magazine because of the honest reviews, which help me choose my music selections. I'd like to see more techno bands and female bands. Also, all those guys/gals who write those rude letters are wrong. Don't read a word they say.

Rhonda Ricker
Tulsa, OK

Your mag is the best! Me and my friends have a band; we really stink, but I hope someday we'll be in 7ball. You guys are the bomb! The GAS Collections rock!

Mimo Morreale
Tulsa, OK

[Don't give up hope, Mimo ... we put a lot of bands that stink in 7ball.]

I'm 15 and live in the too-tiny town of Henryetta. There's a huge supply of country and not much room for "alternative" people. Thanx 4 keeping me informed! You guys are also awesome 4 giving unsigned bands publicity! (Waterdeep rules!)

Sarah Guley
Henryetta, OK



You guys are the best magazine ever. Any news of new releases? I'm really into Christian music. I listen to it all the time and spend all my money on it.

Andy
via the Internet

Hey! Your mag rocks! You guys are the best out there! Thanx for putting one of Lloyd's songs on Gas Collection 6. Hats off to the Gas Collection CDs! There are a lot of bands out there I'd never get to hear without the CDs. The ministry you guys have is so unique and effective! Keep rockin' for Jesus!

Paul Baesel
via the Internet

I felt obligated to take time out from my medical school studies and comment on the Plankeye article [Jan/Feb]. It was an encouragement to see a Christian alternative band take their theology seriously and implement it in the way they present themselves at concerts. Thank you for printing

what Plankeye had to say and not being afraid of offending some readers.

Danny Lee
Chicago, IL

Thank you for letting Plankeye speak their opinions of the Reformed Faith. I am pleased it was described in their own words.

However ... it almost seemed the interviewer had the attitude of, "They are Calvinist, but I guess they're still OK." Calvinism is not just predestination. Calvinism is a transformational worldview. Also, it's not like Plankeye's Calvinism is a landmark (there are several other bands that are Reformed in their theology). I would like to commend you on the excellent work you do and the spectacular magazine you provide. It's not that I feel there was anything intentionally negative in the interview, but an underlying sense Calvinism is bad. If we are to be ecumenical, we must guard against subconscious prejudices.

Travis Scott,
Youth Ministry Coordinator
Oakwood C.R.C.
Belding, MI

Many of the reviews of Christian bands I have heard recently have been one of two types: Either they are bad reviews of good bands because the band plays "different" music than the reviewer would prefer (such as heavy metal and techno), or they are raving reviews of bands whose lyrics are shockingly labeled as Christian when the lyrics directly oppose basic Christian values.

I enjoy certain types of music, and other types really annoy me. However, I wanted a ratings system that would give the honest truth of the quality of both the music being played, and the lyrics that coincide with the music, regardless of what kind of music the listener prefers. From metal to choir praise, this new system would need to be very accurate and should take into account almost all aspects of a song.

After some time, thought, and planning, I have finally created that system. It takes into account the artistry of the performers separately from the lyrics. And a third rating of the marriage of the music to the lyrics to give you the overall style of the song. A fourth rating is then applied that is an average of the first three to give the reader a general idea of the quality of the song. I have rated the Gas Collection #6 from your magazine as an example so that you can see for yourself what I am talking about.

I would like to rate each of your CDs and send you the ratings back to be published in your magazine for parents and kids to read, and as a way of informing the readers about the quality of music that you are really producing. Just because a band is unsigned, doesn't mean they are losers. You have many great songs on this CD, and I hope people today do not see

such changes as becoming worldly, but reaching a world that would otherwise never know God.

With the mentioned need of a new rating system, and with the ever-increasing desire of the reader to be informed, this would be an excellent opportunity for both of us. Would you be willing to send me a pre-subscription to your CD magazines as payment for my ratings service? If I receive a CD on Monday, I can have the ratings sent back via email by Wednesday of the same week. I hope this would be sufficient time to prevent any deadline situations.



Jerry Hanel
via the Internet

[Jerry, we love legalism as much as the next guy—in fact, the idea of a "Pharisee-O-Meter" (patent pending) appealed to us because it saves us the trouble of searching Scripture and praying all the time. By the way, we have never once used or promoted a song that contradicted "basic Christian values."]

I was looking through my March/April issue. I got to page 15 (an ad for rock band Human, on Organic Records). I say, "Now, that is going too far." Who is this "Human" that looks like they have no love for God? I want to know what they feel about God.

Christy Hayden
Gastonia, NC

[Well, we were going to use our new "Pharisee-O-Meter" (patent pending); unfortunately, we stumbled across Scripture that tells us



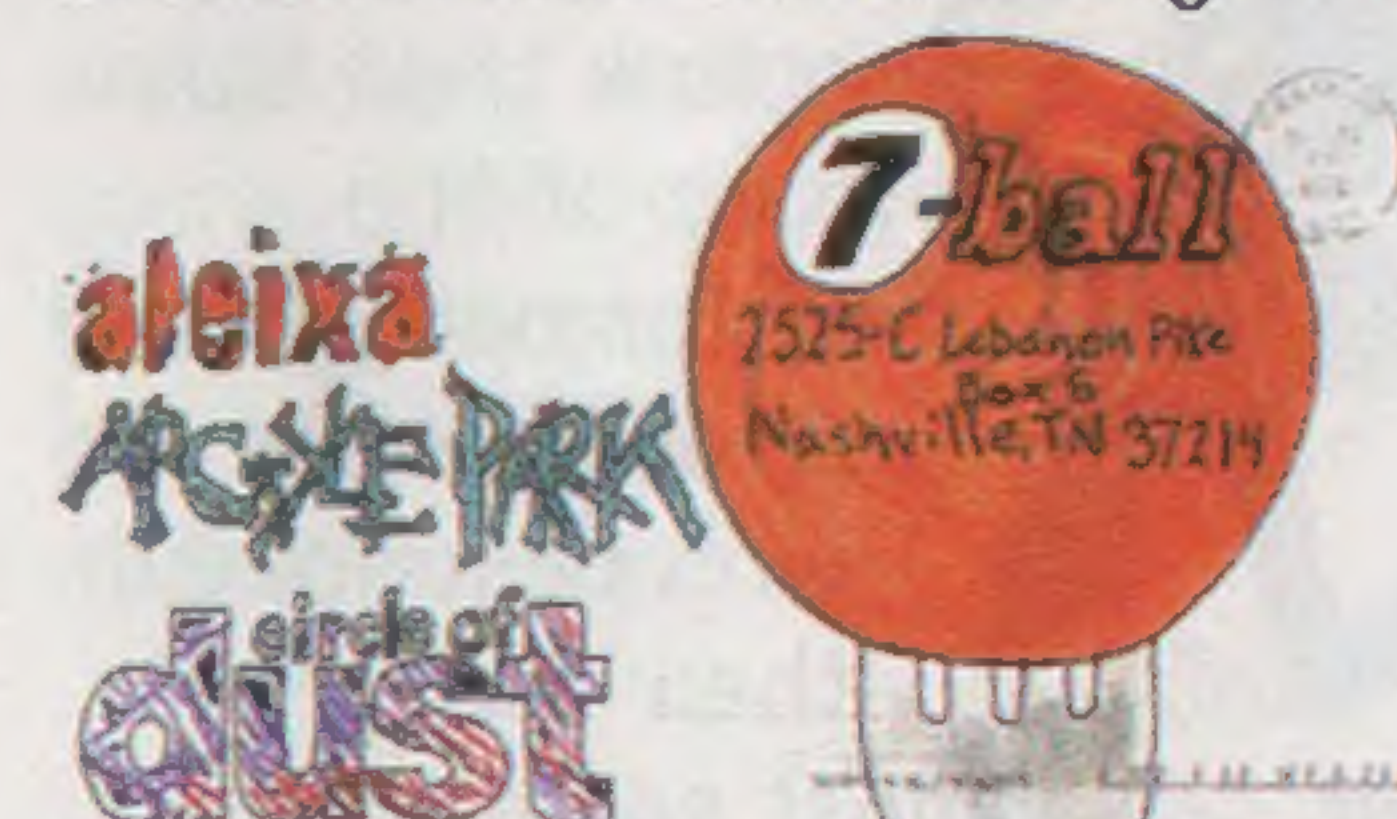
judging people by appearances is wrong. Acts 10:9-20. 1 Samuel 16:6-7. Stuff like that. Isn't that always the way?]

I have only recently become familiar with your magazine. My comment about the CD is I love the music but would appreciate the lyrics. For me, lyrics are as important if not more so than the music. If I can't hear what they are saying, I won't be as apt to buy that artist's work. Just for what it's worth, I really do love your magazine and CD.

David Tien
Omaha, NE

[David, we agree a good "song" means music and lyrics together. We have not been able to print lyrics, but the liner notes found in each and every issue of 7ball are there to give some context for each song on the GAS Collection CD, including song descriptions where possible.]

I'm a little wary of hearing my brothers and sisters sing of noth-



ing except how many times they've been dumped and how upset they are. I really miss there being a whole lot of really rockin' bands that sing wholeheartedly about our God. Our purpose shouldn't be to make people relate to us. Jesus hung out with all kinds of people who couldn't really relate to Him. He just loved them, and that blew their minds.

Jeff Edwards
via the Internet

[Jeff, there is a whole wide world under God—love and death, friendship and betrayal, hope and disappointment—all discussed in the Bible, and important for Christian songwriters to discuss through their art. While a band like The Supertones may sing simply about the joy of knowing the

Lord, a band like Every Day Life struggles with the social implications—and obligations—of our faith. Just as God is bigger than one nation or denomination, He is also bigger than one kind of "Christian" song.]

In your March/April '98 issue you reviewed Cloud2Ground's *e-majn*, saying techno is "being ignored by the mainstream" and "punk and ska are the genre of choice for post-grunge alternative rock fans." I'm confused; electronica's influence is everywhere. Maybe up here in Canada we have different musical tastes, but it doesn't seem electronica and techno have been ignored by the mainstream.



Dave Haberstock
via the Internet

[Oh. Canada.]

I just got my first issue of your mag. I was upset there was nothing about Jars of Clay. I don't know much about them.

Rebecca Bowers
Elmer, NJ

[We featured Jars of Clay on the July/August cover last year. You can purchase back issues from our circulation department. Call them at (800) 352-7ball or email them at [subscriptions@7ball.com].]

Do you have any information on The Outsiders? They are the unsigned band on the new GAS Collection CD.

Sean
via the Internet

[Sean, every issue of 7ball includes liner notes for each GAS Collection CD. You can find out all sorts of things about The Outsiders on the GAS 6 liner notes in the March/April issue, including their Web site, [www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Palms/3833].]

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Satellite Soul, SATELLITE SOUL
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Fourth From The Last, THE W'S
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Blue Belly Sky, THE WAITING
Entertaining Angels Maxi Single, NEWSBOYS
Step Up To The Microphone, NEWSBOYS
Some Kind of Zombie, AUDIO ADRENALINE
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God, REBECCA ST. JAMES
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Threads, GEOFF MOORE & THE DISTANCE
Amplifier, BIG TENT REVIVAL
Smalltown Poets, SMALLTOWN POETS
Various Artists, SELTZER 2
Late Great PFR, PFR

I need to know where I can get info on Brainwash Projects. Their demo on GAS Collection 2 was hype.

Ra Sean "Tito" Hubbs
via the Internet

[After a long wait, the Brainwash Projects album is finally slated to come out soon on Jackson Rubio.]



I kinda like your mag. I don't listen to the type of music you all publish in your mag; I do like it, though. I like P.O.D., Every Day Life, and groups like that (rapcore). Would you ever consider having a article in your mag on Christian rap?

Scottie
via the Internet

[Actually, we have a whole series of "style" articles planned. Last issue, we looked at ska, we have rap this issue, and future pieces on loud music and dance music. Thanks for writing, Scottie. Good



work with that Enterprise thing.]

I got your magazine from my mailbox today and was surprised to see an article about the group I used to be in, the Altar Boys. I



started to cry, right then and there. Every once in a while, it's nice to get a pat on the back and to hear "job well done." I would like to add a little bit to Quincy's last paragraph: We worked hard,

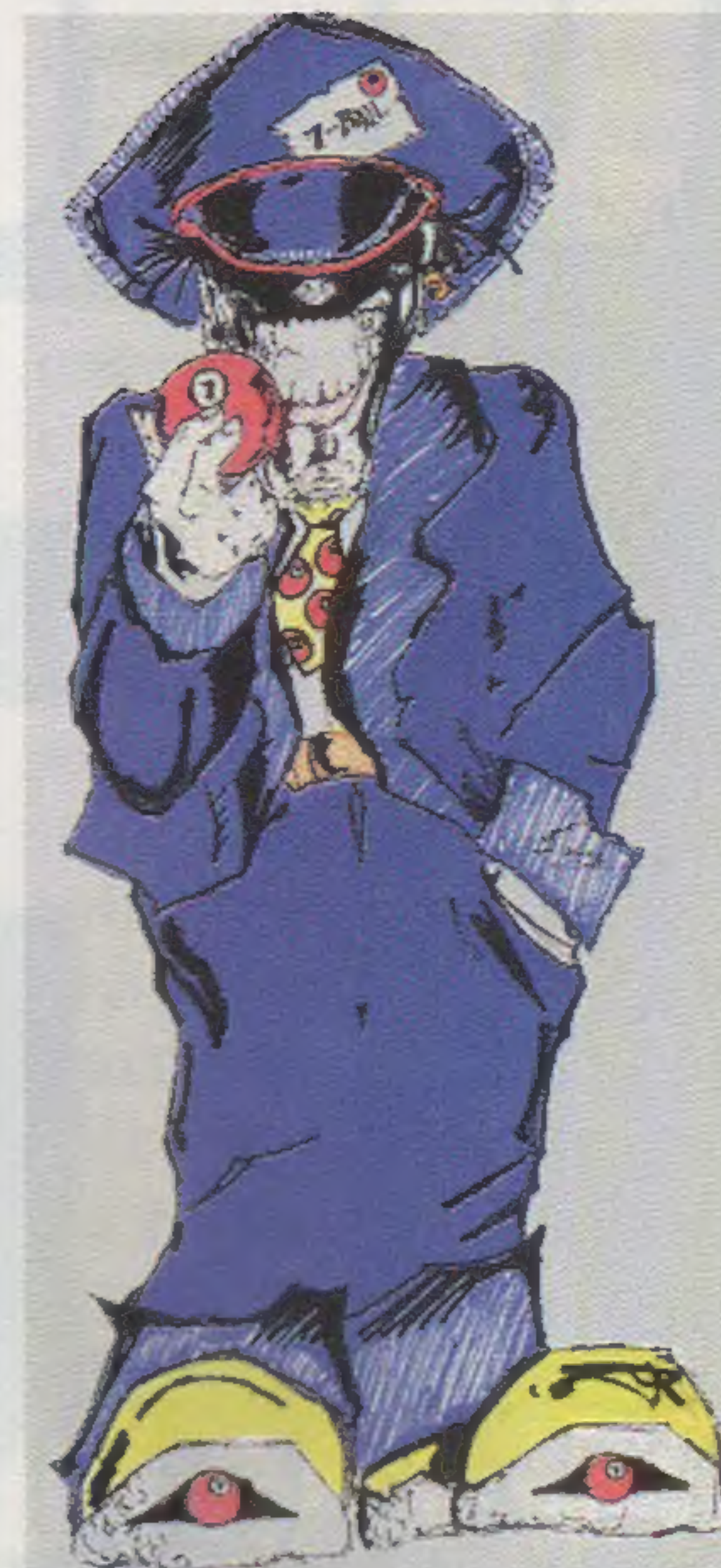


our peers also worked hard; however, it was God Who raised up that group. He deserves the glory. We had a lot working against us. Ric, Jeff and I were all kind of social rejects—we were the unpopular kids in school. From our high school

years up to the Altar Boys, no one would have guessed that we would have been raised up like we were. I was proud to be a part of that group and all the work we did. Thank you, the article made my day (more than you'll ever know).

Mike Stand
via the Internet

[Check out the Altar Boys on the Internet @ www.altarboys.com and Mike @ www.mikestand.com.]



Stacie Kish at the Vox Christmas party

Hey! Got questions for THE INSYDERZ,
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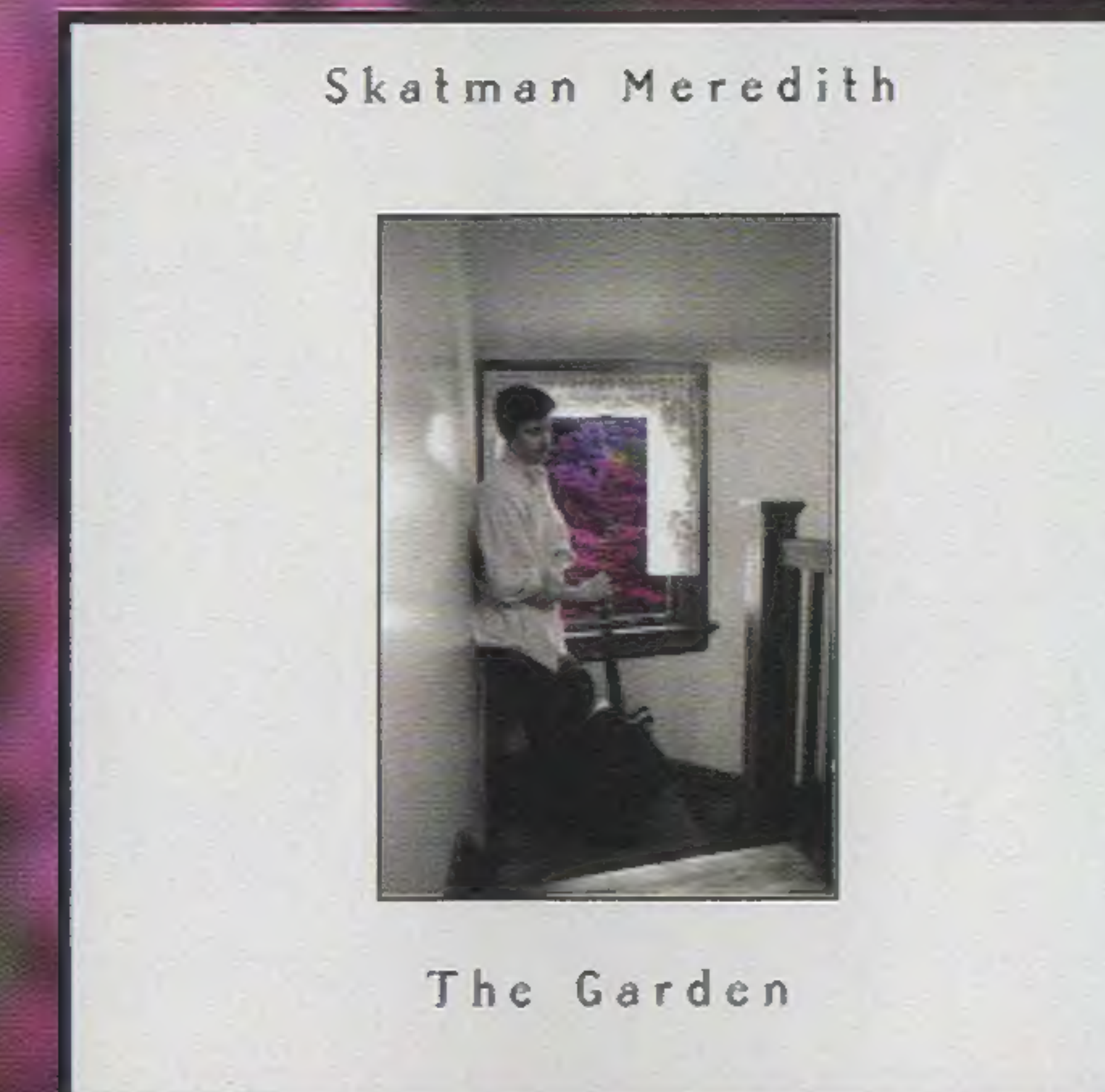
We reserve the right to edit letters for space, clarity and ... well, mostly space and clarity. Send to 7ball Feedback, 2525-C Lebanon Pike, Box 6, Nashville, TN 37214. Email us 7ball@7ball.com.

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Send indie materials to Dale Wilstermann at the same mailing address.

Feedback

"Skatman Meredith has one of the more refreshingly honest approaches to music, God and humanity that I have heard in recent memory. I'm a fan." Robert Beeson (Producer/Jars Of Clay) and VP Essential / Sub-Lime Records

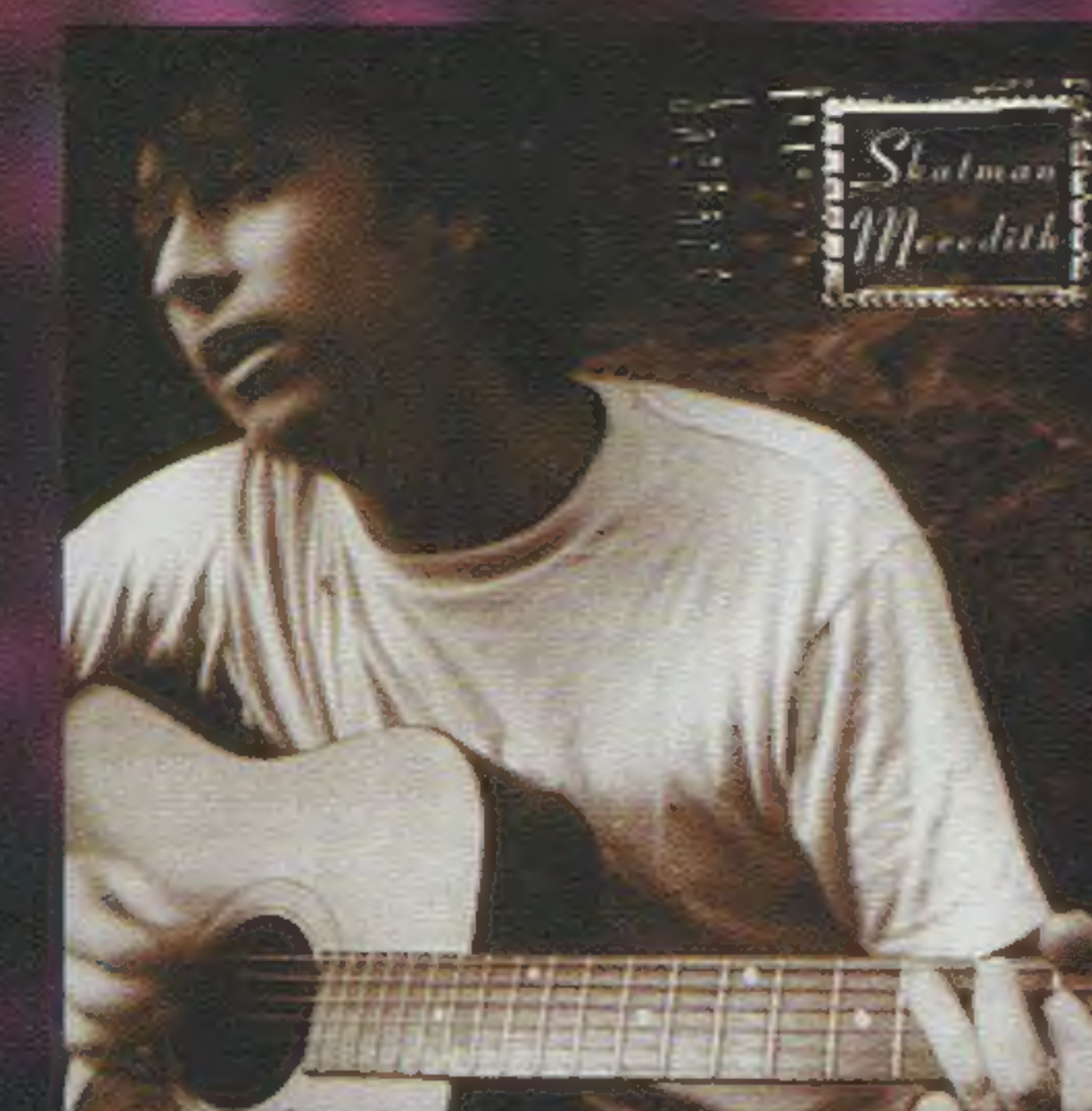


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Starting next issue, this space will include the names and addresses of readers who would like to become pen pals with other 7ball readers. Send your name, age, address, gender, your three favorite bands and your favorite festival. If you are under 18, you need to send a signed note from your parent or legal guardian releasing us to print your address. Mail your info to: 7ball Pen Pals, 2525-C Lebanon Pike, Box 6, Nashville, TN 37214. Fax us at (615) 872-9786. Email us at [7ball@7ball.com].

[Ok, it's a pencil.]

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[LINER NOTES] GAS Collection CD Volume 8



- 13. BLOODGOOD** "Eat the Flesh" KMG Records 4:06
(Written by M. Bloodgood, L. Carlsen) © 1997 Broken Songs (ASCAP) Administered by Kellen Songs, Inc.
If you want an Easter record that rocks, look no further than the classic metal reissue *Bloodgood/Defonation* (KMG Classic Archives). The second half, *Defonation*, pounds away as a dramatic heavy metal soundtrack to Passion Week. "Eat the Flesh," which looks at the Last Supper vividly and clearly, comes from *Bloodgood/Defonation* (KMG Classic Archives).
- SOMEBODY SIGN THESE GUYS:**
- 14. Miranda Stone** "Nevertheless The Dog" Independent 4:29
(Written by M. Stone) © 1997 Miranda Stone / Earthdress Productions
Lead vocalist and rhythm guitarist Paul Deal says if you come see The Plain James play, you'll find they are a bunch of guys who don't even want to be superstars. "People are just gonna see four guys up there ... just average Joes, just plain James. We are very approachable, which is great for us because it lets people connect with us very quickly." Check-out: www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Lounge/28731. For booking info, contact Meef Management at (707)428-5106. "Something Familiar" is from *Tripping Over Daisies*.
- 15. THE PLAIN JAMES** "Something Familiar" Independent 4:25
(Written by The Plain James) © 1997 Plain Music
Lead vocalist and rhythm guitarist Paul Deal says if you come see The Plain James play, you'll find they are a bunch of guys who don't even want to be superstars. "People are just gonna see four guys up there ... just average Joes, just plain James. We are very approachable, which is great for us because it lets people connect with us very quickly." Check-out: www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Lounge/28731. For booking info, contact Meef Management at (707)428-5106. "Something Familiar" is from *Tripping Over Daisies*.



- 1. THE INSYDERZ** "A Good Sailor Knows" KMG Records 4:05
(Written by T.S. Taylor) © 1998 Broken Songs (ASCAP) Administered by KMG Music.
The Insyderz are just one of 16 acts featured on *Surfonic Water Revival: New Surf Music for the Redeemed Masses*, which also includes surfin' rock from the likes of Smalltown Poets, All Star United and Daniel Amos. The Detroit band isn't known for surf, but they know a little about it: "I'd listened to a lot of authentic surf music," guitarist Kyle Wasil says. "It's always been emulated by a lot of '80's punk bands that did a lot of that stuff, like Agent Orange."
- 2. SXPENCE NONE THE RICHER** "Bouquet" R.E.X. Music 3:05
(Written by S. Taylor) © 1983 C.A. Music (a division of C.A. Records, Inc.) (ASCAP)
Although Sxpence None the Richer is the flagship for Steve Taylor's new Squint Entertainment, they actually recorded this Steve Taylor song years earlier. Taylor recalls the night they met and performed a concert together: "Long before there was any practical talk of a record label, they talked to me about producing their next record."
- 3. GRITS** "Comin' Home" Gotee Records 4:29
(Written by T. Collins, S. Jones, T. Correy) © 1997 Gotee Music (BMI) / Butter Hits Music (BMI)
An intense mix of hip-hop, funk, and rock, GRITS formed out of the Silicon Valley Vineyard Church. These guys have a strong desire to share what is most important to them, and have a great ability to do it through their music. So take a listen to what GRITS wants to share with you. "Comin' Home" comes from *Factors of Seven* (Gotee).

GAS Collection 8

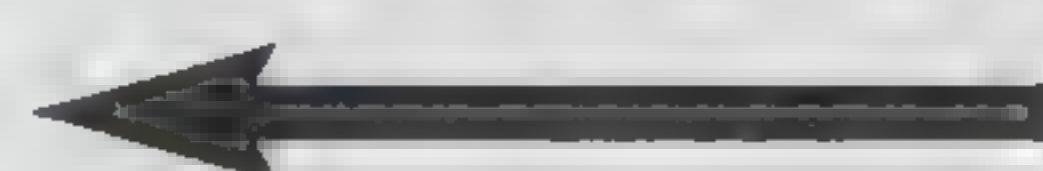
GAS Collection CD Volume 8

[LINER NOTES]

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4. DO NOT SHAKE MARKERS.

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8. **ROOM FULL OF WALTERS** "Laughing At the Ground" Word 4:11

(written by M. Schellgen, A. Austin, K. Starks, M. McDowell) © 1997 Word Music / gosh, it's crowded in here music (ASCAP) Administered by Word Music
The Wichita, Kans., modern rock band Room Full of Walters may be new to national fans, but they've built a regional fanbase through several indie releases. Sleepy-head, anchored in powerful guitar riffs and catchy pop melodies, finds the band exploring our relationships with God. Check out the band's Web site [www.roomfulofwalters.com].

9. **SCATER FEW** "Twinkling of an Eye" Jackson Rubio 1:54

(written by A. Aquire) © 1998 Sacrosanctus Musik (ASCAP) Kosmische Meerman (BMT)
For years, Allan Aquire and his cohorts have mixed and matched such disparate styles as hardcore, reggae and musical drama. The results are no less dramatic or unsettling on their return, *Grandmother's Spaceship*. Drawing on the paranoid spirituality of New Age and UFOlogy, Scaterd Few reminds Christians that we are truly aliens in this world. The hard-hitting "Twinkling Of An Eye," about the rapture and the return of Christ, is from *Grandmother's Spaceship* (Jackson Rubio).

10. **POCKET CHANGE** "I Have Decided" Liquid Disc 2:14

(Public Domain) Arrangement only © 1997
Pocket Change plays punk rock with a purpose, as heard on this charged remake of the classic hymn. They tour with Pep Squad this summer. Find them on the Web [http://falcon.jmu.edu/~saundebn/pchange/pc.html]. For booking, call (616) 242-8169. "I Have Decided" comes from *Steadfast* (Liquid Disc).

11. **SIERRA HART** "Dance My Song For You" Jackson Rubio 4:48

(written by S. Hart) © 1998 High Art For The Working Class (ASCAP)
Sierra Hart's folk-influenced and contemplative debut is the first release from Jackson Rubio's new division dedicated to gospel folk and spiritual-based music. She lives in Santa Cruz. "Dance My Song For You" is from *Sierra Hart* (Jackson Rubio).

12. **THE MISCELLANEOUS** "Redemption" Gray Dot 2:54

(written by S. Loy) © 1996 Viva Songs (Sweden)
After years of trying to break into America, The Miscellaneous' fab *All the Good*

4. **TERRY TAYLOR** "Mr. Flutter" KMG Records 3:47

(written by T.S. Taylor) © 1998 Broken Songs (ASCAP) / Twitchen Vibes (BMT) Administered by KMG Songs
The man behind the new *Surfonic* project is also finally releasing the long-awaited solo album *John Wayne*. Taylor describes "Mr. Flutter": "[It] is that tinge in your gut when ... you've got concerns of every day life. Those feelings are at odds with our faith in God to see us through situations. It taps into the male fear of not being relevant." The song can be found on *John Wayne* (KMG).

5. **THE W'S** "The Devil Is Bad" SoraBellum 3:41

(written by A. Schor, T. Govenor, B. Barker, B. Morris, V. Hellman, J. Carter) © 1998 Soda Pop Music / 5 Minute Walk Music, a division of 5 Minute Walk Records, Inc. (ASCAP)
This six man ska/swing band has a jumping, jazzy sound that includes both retro and punk. "We want to ... be seen as a good band," says alto sax player James "Yabbo" Carter. "We're not afraid of being Christians ... but we do it in a different way than some people like." "The Devil Is Bad" is found on *Fourth From the Last* (SoraBellum).

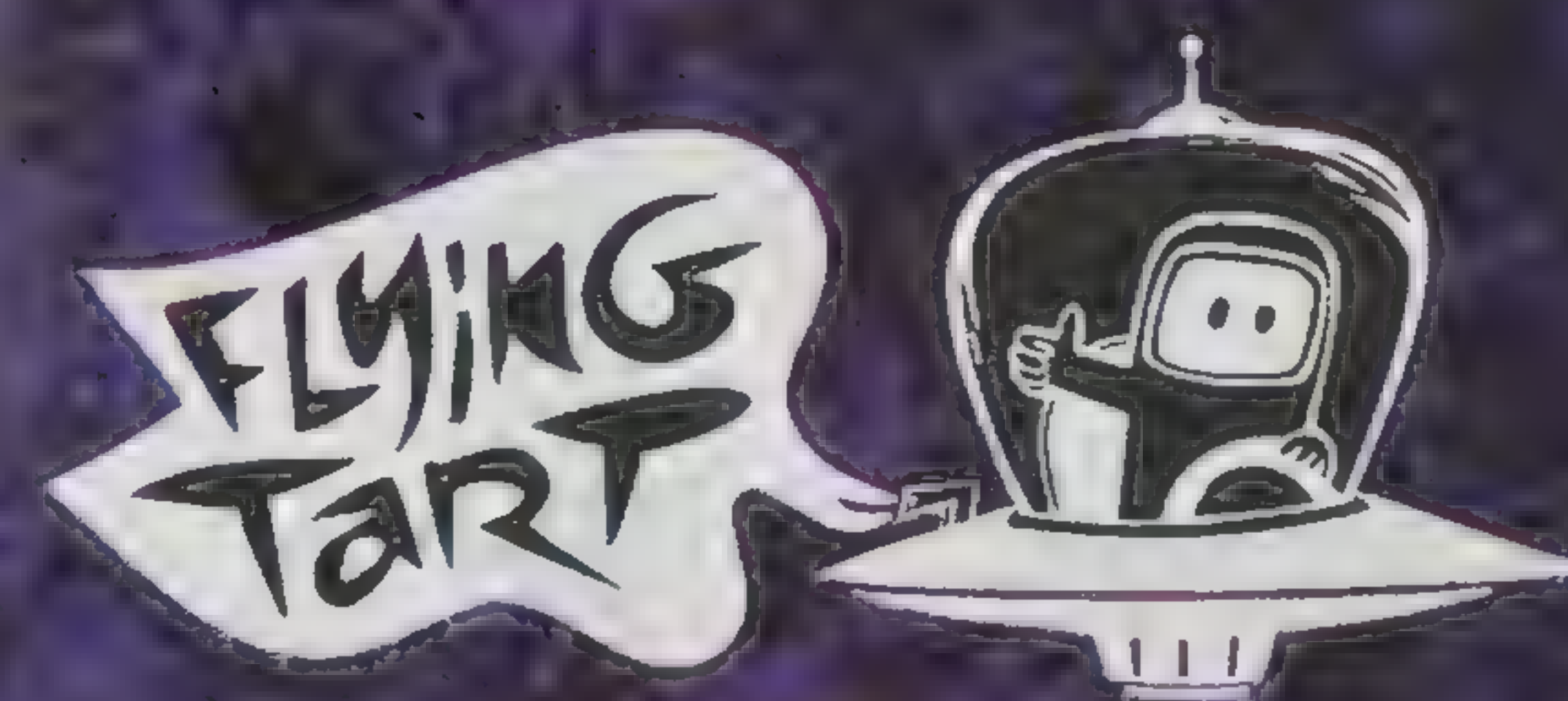
6. **THE HALO FRIENDLIES** "Safe In The Cradle" Jackson Rubio 3:55

(written by The Halo Friendlies) © 1998 High Art for the Working Class (ASCAP)
From '90s/retro new wave to pure pop punk, from riot girl to indie pop, you can't put The Halo Friendlies in a box. "I like the fact that every song has its own personality," says guitarist Judita Wignall. "Safe In The Cradle" comes from their self-titled debut (Jackson Rubio).

7. **HUMAN** "Read Your Mind" Organic 3:55

(written by V. Sapp, R. Kinnett, D. Vanderwalde) © 1998 Ross Island Music (SESAC)
The members of Human have a great love for God, as the Texans weld together distorted rock 'n' roll laden with lyrics urging listeners to realize their need for Christ. "What we're trying to do is bring [Generation X-ers] music that is completely relevant with a show to back it," says lead vocalist, Randy Kinnett. "Read Your Mind" is from their debut, *Out of the Dust* (Organic).

mundane \ 'men-'dān, 'men-,\ adj. 1: of relating to, or characteristic of the world 2: characterized by practical, transitory, and ordinary: commonplace



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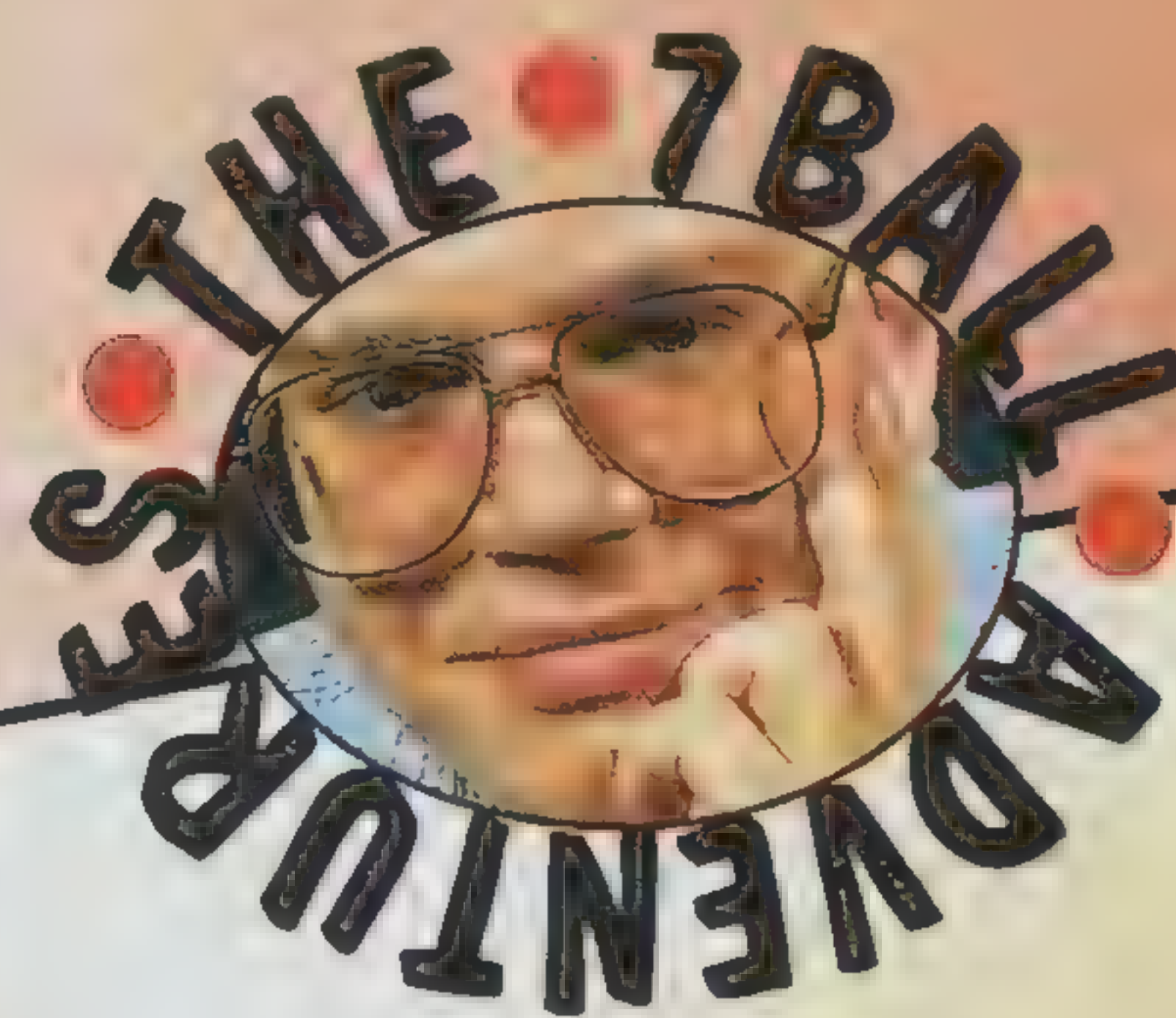
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goes to the 7ball news!

By Chris Well

Friends, Romans and Country Singers (that always cracks me up!): Welcome to another installment of the little mis-sive we call "the news we run in 7ball." (We really should come up with an ongoing title ... but then, I suppose the ever-morphing title of the news column is just one of the reasons you keep coming back!)

Hey! We're award-winning! The first time it occurred to us to actually shove some of our issues into a box and send it out to the Evangelical Press Association, we got two

likes of Tim Tabor (ex- of Prayer Chain); Poor Old Lu; Fold Zandura; Chris Lizotte; Rose Blossom Punch; The Israelites; Soulflood /G; Dimstore Prophets; Cloud2Ground.

The fab CD-ROM music & multimedia Bible study *Actual Reality* has spun off into *Actual Television*, featuring interviews with the likes of The Supertones, Plumb, Third Day and Newsboys. If the elaborate and wacky CD-ROM is any indication, the syndicated series should be unlike any Christian TV you've seen. The show promises to use graphically-driven, aggressive entertainment to share Biblical truths, progressive Christian pop and artists, issue-loaded interviews, life-applications, humor and multimedia amusement. If you haven't gotten *Actual Reality* yet,

Rebecca St. James' "God." The second half sports FF artists trading songs, like Grammatrain remaking the song "God" and Seven Day Jesus covering "Big House." The album also features a duet between dc Talk's Michael Tait and Grammatrain's Pete Stewart and dc Talk's Kevin Max delivering a hearty cover of The Beatles' "Happy Birthday." Speaking of dc Talk, the trio is in the studio—*Supernatural* is penciled in as a fall release.

One Hundred Days has a new album coming soon, their first with new members Darryl McWaters and Tony Lind. It's also the first to reflect their edgier disposition (hopefully, their dark harmonies and melodic sense will remain intact). For audio samples, chord charts and lyrics, check out their boss Web site at [www.golden.net/~tanrocks].

The guys in *Reality Check* broke another stage (bringing the total up to five). It's not intentional—just some nights they see a stage and know it's going down (they stress the importance of venues making stronger stages). The band is writing for a new album, which will be produced by Gotee brother Todd Collins. There is also the possibility of an EP towards summer's end, which might include live recordings of some praise songs they've been doing in concert.

If you're looking for something scary, the loooooong-delayed Circle of Dust album *Disengage* should be in stores as you read this. The album takes the patented Circle of Dust sound and twists, turns and morphs it into an even more advanced and modernized sound. It cap-

don't delay—it boasts more than 200 interactive screens, more than 100 QuickTime movies, and more than 25 artists and music videos. The CD-ROM also features ESPN sports commentator Clark Kellogg and former American Gladiator Salina Bartunek. Check out their site at [www.actreal.com].

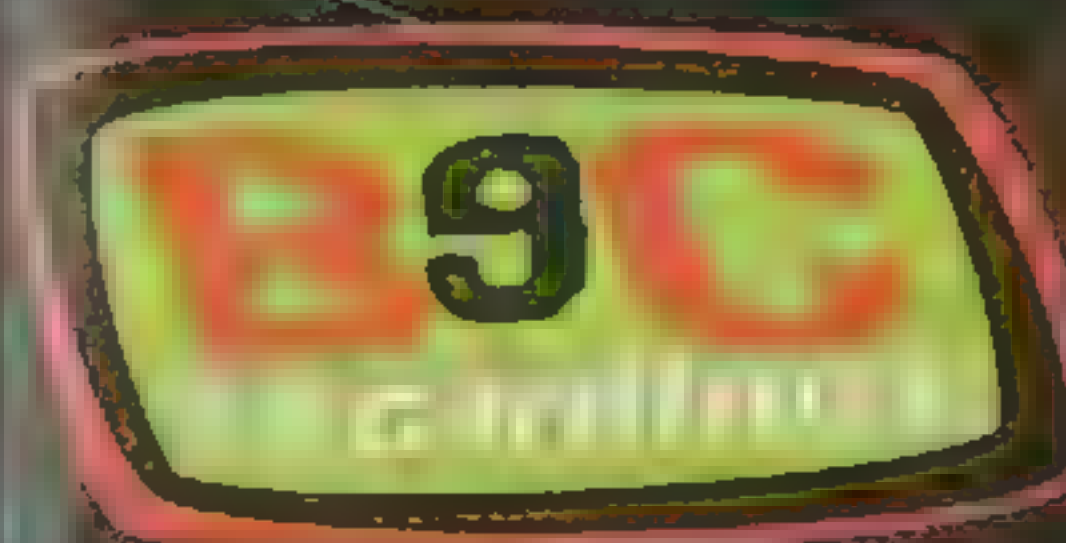
ForeFront Records celebrates 10 years with the double-disc X (10): *The Birthday Album*. The first half features such high-profile songs as dc Talk's "Jesus Freak," Audio Adrenaline's "Big House" and



susan k. baggette
photos by william j. moriarty

awards: First Place for "Critical Review" (our review of Fold Zandura's Return); Fifth Place for the cover of our "New Voices of Modern Music" issue (May/June '97). We are now incorrigible.

The stars come out for *Sparkler Vol. 1*, a benefit CD on N-Soul for the Judeo Christian Outreach Center, a shelter for the homeless in Virginia. Many of these tracks are new and unreleased, from the



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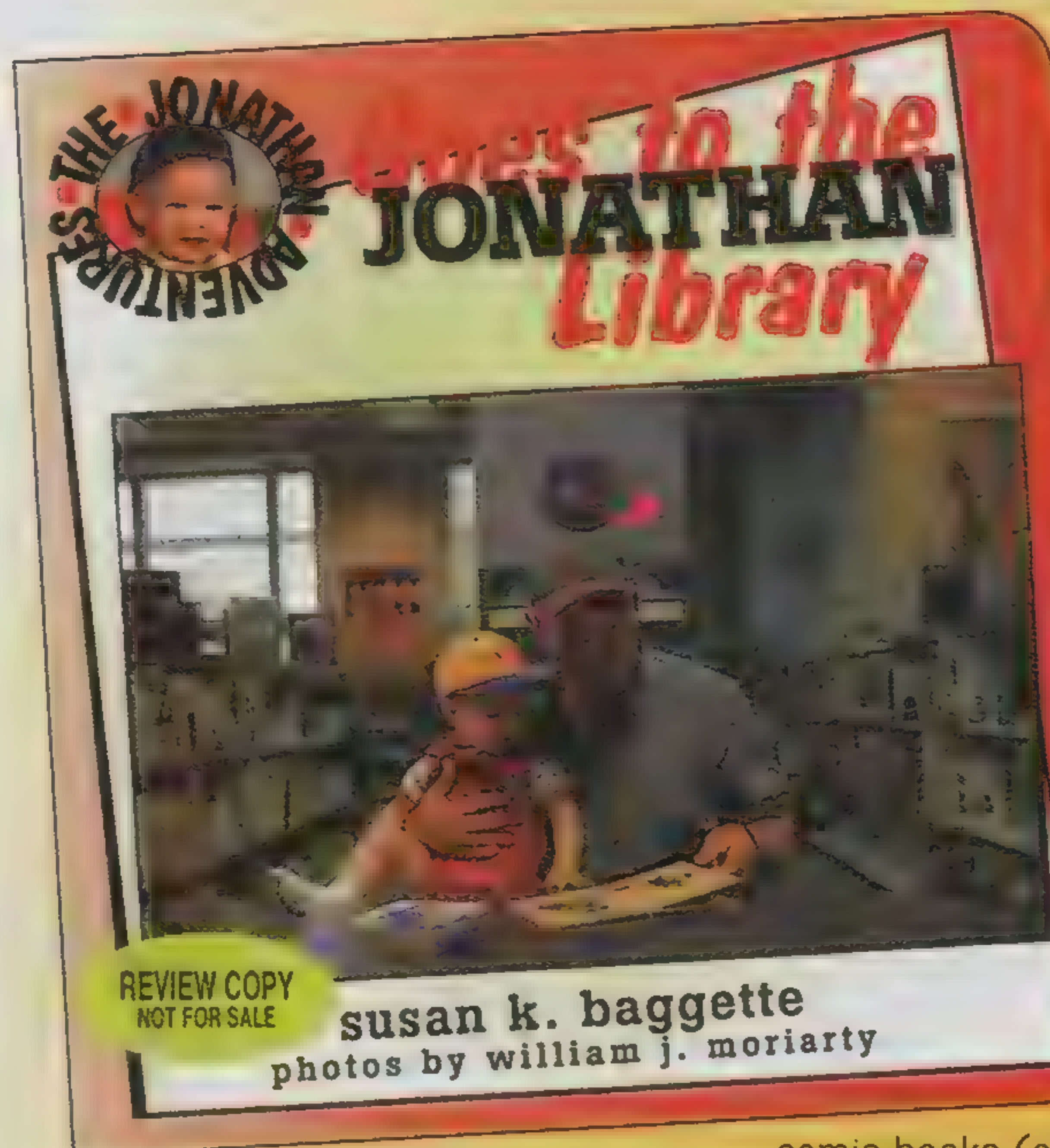
Recommended if you like: RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE, DEFTONES, POD, STAVESACRE

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tures everything from powerful beats and aggressive guitar to ethereal and ambient soundscapes, to make Circle of Dust's best and most diverse work to date. Website: [www.dusted.com].

When Rich Mullins died last September, all that remained of what would be his next record was a weakly-recorded demo. The double-disc *The Jesus Record* includes that tape, just Rich's lone voice accompanied by one simple, acoustic instrument; the second disc features the same songs, fleshed out by the Ragamuffins (including vocalists Rick Elias, Mark Robertson and Jimmy A) and assorted guests.

The recent explosion of modern praise & worship continues with *Exodus*, featuring new stuff from Jars of Clay, Sixpence None the Richer, Third

Day and a host of big pop names. It's a strong record, striking a nice balance between allowing the artists their individuality, and fitting everything into a whole. Check it out.

Who knew? As I've admitted here in ye ol' pages of *7ball*, I have a certain fondness for the paneled-pages of

comic books (or "graphic literature," as the more pompous might refer to it). In a recent lettercol for a comics fan magazine (sort of the comic book equivalent to *7ball*, except without the companion CD every issue), I discovered that Batman's former sidekick, Nightwing (the original Robin, Dick Grayson, all grown up), is "a Christian." Although the book's writer doesn't plan any religious plots for the book, apparently recent issues of *Nightwing* showed his CD collection includes *dc Talk*, *Guardian* and *Whitecross* (maybe we should send him

some *7ball* GAS Collection CDs!). Dick also owns an NIV (well, if he existed).

On that remarkably irrelevant note, we come to the end of another "7ball news column" (whatever we happen to call it). Send news items and materials to *7ball*, 2525-C Lebanon Pike, Box 6, Nashville, TN 37214. Email [7ball@7ball.com]. And yes, my superhero action figures (ok, "dolls") were returned to me safely. Thanks for your concern during this ordeal.



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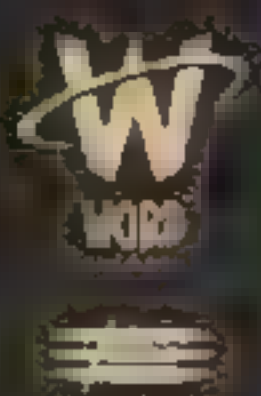
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Surf's Up

Old meets new as some of Christian rock's finest come together to celebrate the Son

by Dan MacIntosh

Somebody once said that if ska music ever goes back in time, it'll go back to the '50s. I think about it. Who could have imagined The Supertones and Five Iron Frenzy even five years ago? KMG Records is wagering that surf could be the next wave with *Surfonic: Water Revival. New Surf Music for the Redeemed Masses*. The sixteen acts featured cut across the spectrum of modern Christian music—including hip newcomers like The Insyderz, Smalltown Poets and All Star United, and rock pioneers like Randy Stonehill and Michael Roe—all shaped and styled by the adventurous spirit and wit of producers and songwriters Terry Taylor and Rick Altizer.

"Musically, it covers the whole era of surf music, from the primitive, garagey stuff to the real orchestrated, *Pet Sounds* kind of thing," Taylor says. "We wanted this record to rage, but also have some serious spiritual depth to the message, so we've made it kind of like a musical with conceptual lyrics."

The material on *Surfonic* is far ranging, covering everything from beach baptisms at Corona Del Mar ("California Blue"), to the atypical surf song "The Net," which provides Taylor with another opportunity to demonstrate his flair for metaphor: *inside our walls/ great wild balls/ turning free from teachers replacing love with learning/ we go down/don't know how/ everybody's surfing now*. "What it's talking about is surfing on the internet. It's kind of a little turnaround."

It's also the kind of thing that raises *Surfonic* above the level of a novelty record—and makes it all the more likely a catalyst for the return of surf. As KMG Vice-President Kent Songer puts it, "*Surfonic* contains all the elements that make for successful musical genres—honesty, fun, memorable hooks, fun, the ability to do rockin' cuts or ballads and, of course, fun."

Songer had a number of people in mind to handle production chores for the record, but when he learned Taylor



BAND: The Insyderz

TRACK ON SURFONIC: "A Good Sailor Knows"

The Detroit outfit first worked with *Surfonic* ringleader Terry Taylor when he helped them with vocals on their hot ska praise & worship album, *The Insyderz Present Skalleluia*. They're already working on their third album and will hit the road in November for SkaMania, with The Supertones and Five Iron Frenzy.



BAND: Plumb

TRACK ON SURFONIC: "Surfer Girl Replies"

Plumb vocalist Tiffany Arbuckle explains about her band's *Surfonic* track, "The lyrics state, *I am no saint/ I am no martyr/ but I will be your surfer girl*. It's stating that although I'm not perfect, I am willing to be used in whatever way God chooses." Look for a new record from Plumb later this year.

had lived most of his life near Doheeny Beach, a location mentioned in the Beach Boys classic "Surfin' USA," he immediately extended the offer. "Essentially, the idea was to create a musical where I'd write the songs, and invite various people to come in and lend their expertise," Taylor says. "We got some different participants, some very familiar with surf music, some not."

He also invited Altizer, another songwriter who easily blends brilliance with a zany disposition. "I'm a very big fan of Terry Taylor and felt very honored to be asked to write for his project," Altizer says. "Terry Taylor is a songwriting machine and, frankly, doesn't need my help in any way." Nevertheless, Altizer put together a trio of numbers, including one each for Rebecca St. James and Skillet.

He even wrote and performed one of his own. "It's a tribute to Brian Wilson and his creative period—circa 1967. Kind of psychedelic with lots of weird little vocal parts and interesting chord changes. It was a real challenge for me to pull off, but Terry was very encouraging."

Perhaps nobody can better draw a parallel between the current commercial success of ska and the potential success of surf music than The Insyderz. The Detroit outfit took a break from recording its third album—and debut for KMG—to lay down a song called "A Good Sailor Knows."

Guitarist Kyle Wasil is reluctant to speculate on the commercial potential of late '90s surf music. "I don't like to get into all that—about fads and all that jazz."

He's more enthusiastic about the song The Insyderz

played on *Surfonic*. "We knew Terry Taylor; he helped us with some vocals on *Skalleluia*, so we were pretty good friends with him." Although they generally record in a different genre, The Insyderz know a little about surf. "I'd listened to a lot of authentic surf music," Wasil says. "It's always been emulated by a lot of '80's punk bands that did a lot of that stuff, like Agent Orange."

A resident of Huntington Beach, Calif., Plankeye guitarist Eric Balmer may live closer than the Midwestern-based Insyderz to the surf culture, yet he was only slightly aware of surf music. "I never listened to surf music, and I was hesitant about doing it." Nonetheless, Balmer's giant guitar leads are all over the fast, galloping "Thrill Seeker."

Smalltown Poets added a little Southern flavor to "Wave Perfect." Drummer Byron Goggin says the band chose this song because it helped them break from their routine. "We have a pretty natural knack for writing good, mid-tempo slow songs. Anytime somebody throws a fast song at us like that—for a project like this—it's perfect."

Goggin's remark demonstrates how each artist has very personal reasons for their involvement. KMG is proud to have so many different artistic motivations saturating this one release. "Everyone who has been involved directly with *Surfonic* has different goals," Songer notes. He points to Scott Thunder, the radio producer who first pitched the *Surfonic* idea to Songer, and Terry Taylor as having the opportunity to show respect to a genre important to their musical careers.

[continued on page 30]

Terry Taylor Rides a New Wave

Get it straight: Terry Taylor is a legend. As chief leader behind the awesome *Surfonic Water Revival* project, Taylor is one of the reasons alternative Christian music even exists. Over the course of 20 years and as many records, Taylor has, with inimitable wit and lyrical prowess, exposed the collective neuroses and hypocrisies of the American Church.

As a member of such bands as Daniel Amos, The Swirling Eddies and Lost Dogs, he and his compatriots rewrote the Christian rock paradigm, giving voice to frustrated young Christians.

As producer, Taylor has worked with many of the bright lights of progressive Christian music, including Mortal and Poor Old Lu. As a songwriter, he's used his deeply philosophical Christian perspective and Old Testament sardonic wit to explore such topics as sexual harassment, unsuccessful missionary tactics and shallow pew warmers.

What's even more amazing than Taylor's past triumphs is the fact that after two decades, he's still at it. He's producing, writing and performing on *Surfonic*; he has a new solo album, *John Wayne*; and as newly-appointed A&R director at KMG Records, he has his hand in the future of Christian modern rock.

At the John Wayne Airport in Taylor's home Orange County, Calif., there is a life-size statue of The Duke greeting the huddled masses.

It's something of a landmark, a pre-millennial antithesis to the under-

stated grace of Michelangelo's David.

To Taylor, this statue of John Wayne became an archetype. "I started writing the song in the middle of the Orange County bankruptcy," he says of the title track. "It was a real shock not only to the nation, but around the world, to hear that Orange County which was supposedly very stable, and then one day the headlines are *Orange County—Bankrupt!* I thought, That's a very interesting parallel to our lives and the discovery of our spiritual bankruptcy. We discover in certain circumstances we have nothing to draw on, no source of peace or tranquillity in crisis. I just had this picture of people in Orange County running, driving, whatever, to get down to the John Wayne airport, running toward the statue and saying, *John, we're in big trouble—what are we gonna do?*"

The concept of people looking for an icon to rescue them is not new for Taylor; what is different is the touch of genuine humanity and concern that marks it, as it has begun to mark much of Taylor's later work. Consider "Mr. Flutter," also from *John Wayne*: "Mr. Flutter" is that tinge in your gut when you realize that you can't pay this month's rent, or you've got concerns of everyday life. Those feeling are at odds with our faith in God to see us through situations. It taps into the male fear of not being relevant, the need to be validated."

While Taylor has been mislabeled a pessimist or cynic, deep in his gut the man believes it's all going to work out all right. "A bad rap for me for a number of years was I was down on the church," Taylor admits, his voice pained. "I never felt that way at all. I have a song on *John Wayne*, 'Chicken Crosses the Road,' basically says, It's all gonna be all right. I'm talking to the church; it's like, *We're all in this together*. I've always had the sense, *He who began a good work in you will be faithful*. That's always been part of the message."

For an example, he points to the title track of the Daniel Amos classic *Bibleland*: "That captures my mindset on what life is all about. You have the picture of an amusement park that's shabby and run-down. The person who built it was trying to convey something about the Gospel, but it's obviously sort of cheesy and a failure. But then you have the bridge: *Something beautiful, something clean/behind the shabby Bible scenes/something real that built a dream called BibleLand*. I think that's what life is, a dichotomy between two things: our trying to convey who God is, and who He really is. It's about how even through our brokenness God can come through and make a difference in someone's life."

Taylor's influence on alternative Christian music has garnered the admiration of younger bands like Starflyer 59, Joy Electric and The Prayer Chain. Joy Electric's Ronnie Martin offers, "For me, Terry Taylor defined what legitimate, cool Christian music should be all about—up-to-date musically and lyrically, trying things all other Christian bands aren't trying at the moment."

Ronnie's brother Jason, of Bon Voyage and Starflyer 59, agrees: "Terry Taylor is probably my biggest influence. He's

one of my favorite songwriters of all time. The *Alarma Chronicles* are probably my favorite records of all time."

While artists are quick to cite Taylor as a major influence, and are eager to work with him, his record sales are not typically proportionate to his creativity. *Darn Floor—Big Bite* (a brilliant treatise on the difficulty of finite humans trying to grasp an infinite God) still sounds relevant eleven years after its release—but sold a paltry 7000 copies and is now out of print (as is much of the Daniel Amos back catalog, though KMG is taking steps to change that).

Much of today's audience is too obsessed with finding Christian bands who copy secular bands to be bothered with a songwriter still decades ahead of his time. While secular bands like Rancid are powerful enough to promote a resurgence of interest in The Clash, it seems to take a major miracle to prod Christian music listeners to explore their own rich history, a history in which Terry Taylor plays a crucial part. "I don't think people like Larry Norman or Randy Stonehill get near the recognition and respect they ought to get," Taylor laments.

Though the domination in the market by the kinds of bands featured on *Surfonic* signifies an unparalleled market acceptance of alternative rock, it also brings ample rejection of older, tenured artists like Taylor and his peers. "Until KMG came along, no label wanted to fund a Daniel Amos record. I have friends who really have something to say in Christian music, and are being passed over. If you ignore those people because you don't think they can sell as many records as the flavor of the day, you're making a grave mistake."

Though obviously irked, Taylor's voice never raises beyond conversational tone, a testament to the man's civility and rationality. "There's not a great sense of our own history. I think that's also true of the church in America, and it's a shame."

Fortunately, *Surfonic* is the perfect vehicle to bring the pioneers and the newcomers together: The Supertones, The Insyderz, Plumb, Smalltown Poets and All Star United are stacked side by side with the likes of Michael Roe, Lost Dogs and Daniel Amos.

Surfonic also seems ideal to take Taylor's pointed wit to a broader audience, but he has more important—and eternal—concerns. "I hope people get a sense of themselves and who God is," he says softly. "I think the joy for me right now is in finding those moments in life where God's grace just shines. When I'm sitting in the house and I hear my wife's footsteps coming up the stairs, that's something I count as all the world to me."

"As controversial as [Daniel Amos] has been, if I've failed in my songwriting to convey a message of God's grace, I've failed as a songwriter. A supreme compliment is when someone says, *When I listen to a song of Terry Taylor's, I get a sense of who God is*. To be able to be in a place where God uses you as a vessel to say something, to give some light to the blind—that's a supernatural thing."

—J. Edward Keyes



BAND: Smalltown Poets

TRACK ON SURFONIC: "Wave Perfect"

The Smalltown Poets performance on *Surfonic* includes the guest guitars of surf music legend Paul Johnson. "He's basically the guy that started surf music," Taylor says. Smalltown Poets, meanwhile, has been heavy on the road with their monster-selling debut—and releasing the follow-up this fall.



BAND: Skillet

TRACK ON SURFONIC: "Last Day of Summer"

In addition to recording for *Surfonic*, Skillet has a new album of their own, *Hey, You, I Love Your Soul*. Their rock 'n' roll drive is charged with electronics—and melody. "Some of the Prodigy music is boring to me," vocalist John Cooper says. "They might have some cool ideas, but it never has any dynamics."



BAND: All Star United

TRACK ON SURFONIC: "Surfer's Paradise"

The contribution from All Star United includes guest guitar-genius Phil Keaggy. The band is also working on a brand new record of their own, with more of that British pop-meets-surf rock 'n' roll you love so well (with some punk thrown in for flavor). Look for that later this year.

(continued from page 27)

Then there's Rebecca St. James, who's stepped out of her comfort zone because she believes this is a great ministry tool. "She grew up in Brisbane Australia—near Surfer's Paradise—and wants those she knew to have something they can relate to."

Others who found a reason to catch a wave include The Supertones, Plumb, Lost Dogs, Andy Prickett, Daniel Amos, Phil Keaggy, Silage and Chuck Girard. Taylor even recruited surf guitar legend Paul Johnson. "He's basically the guy that started surf music," Taylor says. "Dick Dale is the guy who comes to mind, but Paul started playing at the same time." Johnson's music was mostly instrumentals, fashioned after Duane Eddy. "Surfers started showing up at his concerts saying, *That sounds like a guy shooting the curl*, and surf music was born."

That Taylor would recruit someone like Johnson to contribute to the record is a testament to his passion for authenticity. "We wanted to stay away from being a novelty record. We wanted to stay away from it being *Jesus on a surfboard*. Traditional surf music doesn't have any vocals on it, but I thought, instead of doing an instrumental record that would garner little interest, the record should have some sort of subject matter. I wanted to see Christian music do something on the front end of a trend—not following one," he states emphatically. "I also see opportunity for outreach. Some of the songs have powerful imagery. People will have to respond from a spiritual perspective—you can't listen to these songs and sit on the sidelines."

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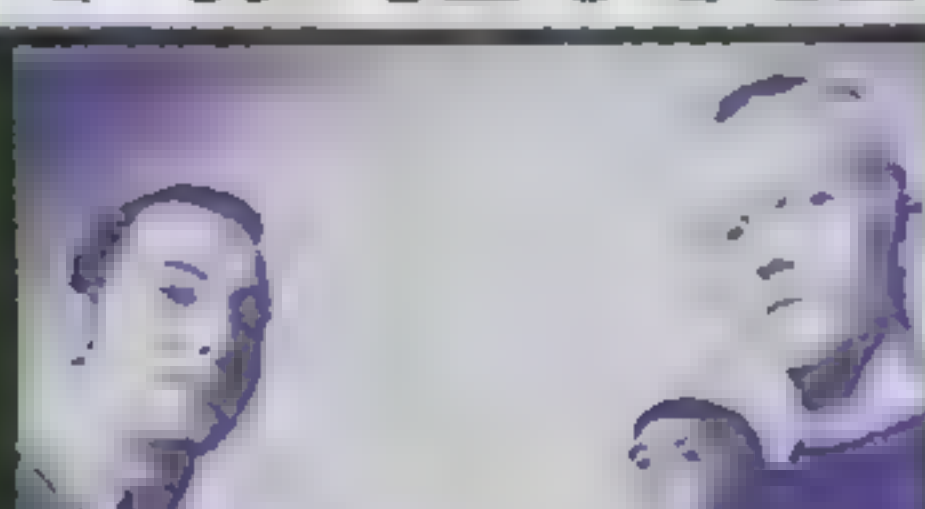
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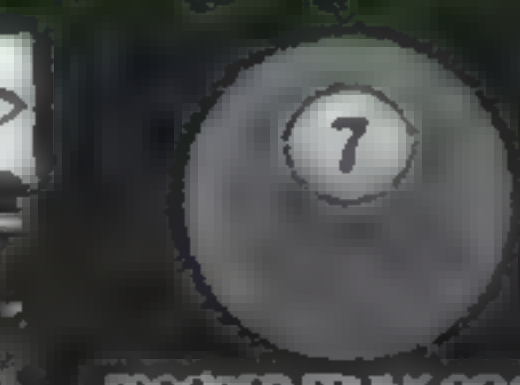
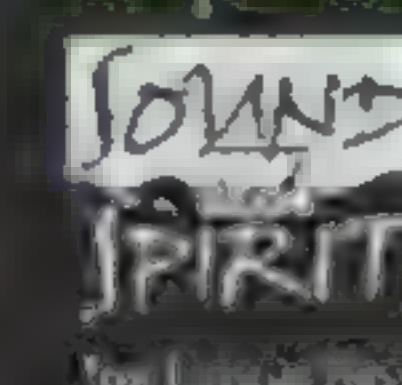
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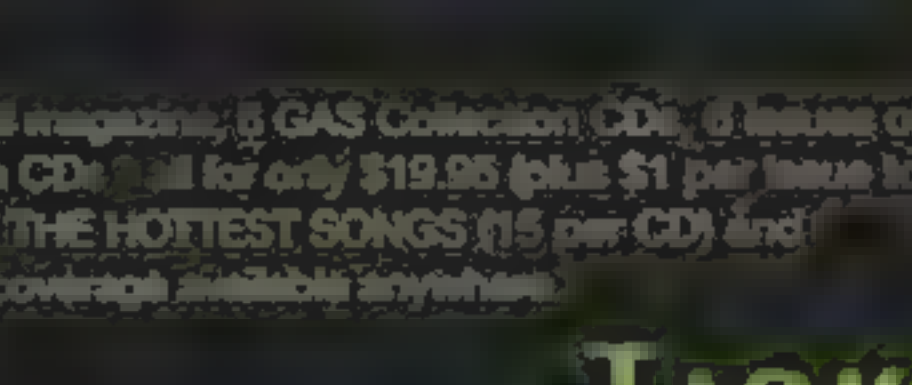
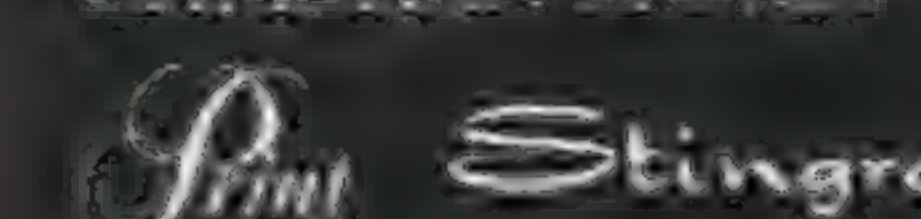
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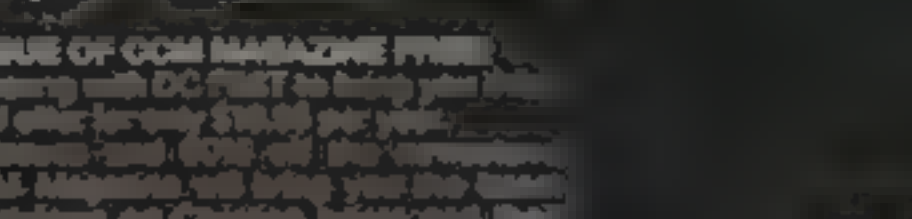


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a slew of new rappers intent on making a difference

thought for these labels to throw a couple rap groups out there just to say they had rap on their label."

While Grapetree was taking small steps towards establishing itself as Christian music's rap authority, Gotee Records was making dents in the urban market as well. Started in response to the Christian industry's lack of involvement in urban music, Gotee launched the career of vocal group Out Of Eden. Gotee has since released two records with GRITS, a concept hip-hop project from Gotee Brothers (Erace), and new artist Knowdaverbs debuts later this year.

Todd Collins, co-founder of Gotee with Joey Elwood and de Talk's Toby McKeenon, sees some specific reasons for Christian rap's stunted growth. "I feel the problem with Christian music is it's not always indicative of what's going on in mainstream music. When you look at the Billboard Top 100 and 30 percent is urban music and then you look at our top 25 and less than one percent is urban music, something is out of kilter."

Part of the problem, Collins notes, is a lack of racial diversity in Christian music. "We don't have enough people of different cultures working within the hierarchy of our industry. When you have an older white guy who grew up on '60's and '70's

such as GRITS tour with groups like The Cross Movement alongside urban artists like Out Of Eden or Virtue. But larger, more daunting circumstances force the label to rely on creative tour packaging. "A lot of these promoters aren't going to take a package like that," Collins says. "They don't know how to market and publicize to that demographic. They've probably never done it before."

The members of The Cross Movement have seen the problems of marketing, radio and touring firsthand, but don't see any point in getting bitter. "Christian rap has been a letdown, so we understand," member Branch says. "We're trying to make improvements... as rap artists, we have to establish ourselves as authentic and capable of creating a demand."

Williams notes one thing that could springboard Christian rap to a higher level: Hammer has lately proven to be an advocate of Christian hip-hop, hosting a Sunday morning radio show on a secular station in the Bay area. Play (of Kid & Play and the House Party movies), another rap star who has come to know Christ in recent months, is actively involved in Christian hip-hop.

Doors continue to open for rap artists determined to grow the industry. Artists such as T-Bone, KIIS, The Dynamic Twins,



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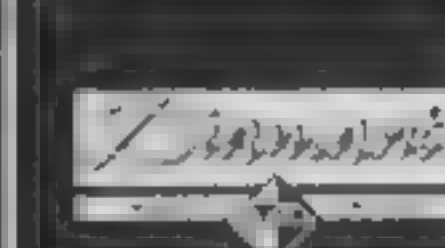
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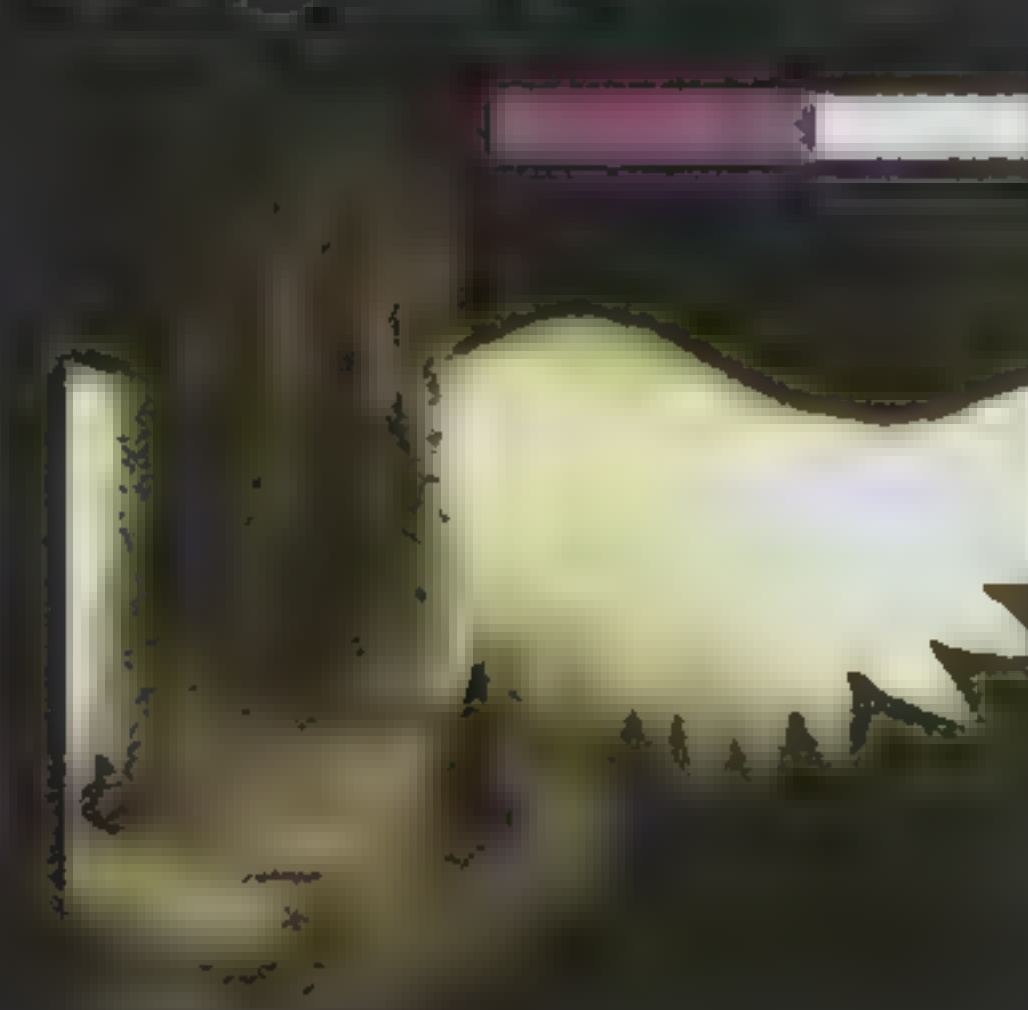
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STEVE
TAYLOR



There's a sense of panic coursing through the hallway alcove of offices Squint Entertainment occupies in the Word Records building in Nashville. It seems Squint is about to lose the lease on their Los Angeles office due to a paperwork snafu and the whole staff is on full alert, making frenzied conference calls and sending rushed faxes to the coast to try and prevent their L.A. colleagues from becoming homeless.

It rushes Squint founder Steve Taylor—decorated artist, record producer, video director and now entertainment mogul. He's running late. In the end, the L.A. staff gets to keep all their stuff in the same place. But, Taylor admits, this hassle was not something he expected when he decided to start a record label.

He didn't really know what to expect; starting a record company was never a "life-long passion or dream, by any means," he says. He just wanted to build a home for Christian artists who don't feel they have to be on a general market label for quality and wide exposure. Taylor's background—which included a short stint with general market rock band Chagall Guevara—gave him perspective about both sides of the marketing fence.

Many think moving into the mainstream means more artistic freedom, but Taylor found out differently. "The alternative scene is as restrictive as the Gospel scene," he says. "What's strange isn't just the musical constraints—because the whole idea of alternative music was supposed to be that there aren't any, but of course there were—but there was a political agenda you were supposed to buy into as well, which was absurd."

Taylor was advised by his A&R person at MCA to not mention his pro-life beliefs in interviews with the press. "Then the blinders came off," he says. "I thought, *Oh I get it. I've traded in one set of constraints for a whole other set.*"

The highest satisfaction for an artist who is a Christian, Taylor says, should be when their artistic pursuits and their pursuit of God come together. So he set Squint out with the ideal that artists shouldn't have to pick between being a Christian artist or a mainstream artist. "If it's good, you can bring those things along."

He believed it important to have employees intimately familiar with the workings of both the Christian and the mainstream, "not someone that you pass the record off to at Atlantic or Virgin or wherever and hope they like it," he says. "You find out really quickly that other than getting records out to a few other stores, it really doesn't do much of anything. Our question was, *How do we do something so the buck stops with us?*"

So far, Squint has made an impression. Sixpence's first single aimed at the mainstream, "Kiss Me," has gotten routine play at college stations, adult alternative and modern rock radio. Their song "Easy to Ignore" was featured on an episode of the Steven Bochco cop drama *Brooklyn South*. Sixpence None the Richer was recently invited to take part in the *Lilith Fair* tour.

Sixpence None the Richer recently returned from Paris, France where they filmed the new concept video for "Kiss Me." The video, directed by Taylor, was inspired by the classic French film, *Jules and Jim*.

Records and music videos, however, are not the sole purpose of Squint. Just as essential are plans to venture into feature films. "I wouldn't be here if film weren't part of the agenda," Taylor says.

Of course, films take serious money. Therefore, Taylor partnered with Word Entertainment, who also felt the need for getting into film art. As one Word executive put it to him, "How can we as Christians say we want to affect culture and not be involved in film? It's an essential medium."

Squint's first film is *St. Gimp*, directed by Taylor and co-written by Taylor and long-time video collaborator Ben Pearson. Taylor won't comment on the film except to say it's a drama. "I don't know I've ever seen a short paragraph description of a movie that made me want to go see it," he explains. "Probably the biggest reason I'm

uncomfortable talking about it is I haven't done one yet. I'm happy to talk about music; I'm a lot more confident about that. But if I was reading this, I'd be thinking, *Yeah, what does he know?*"

A position where Taylor displays a good deal more confidence is in the producer's chair, where he has guided projects for the Newsboys, Guardian and, most recently, Sixpence None the Richer. For Sixpence's Squint debut, he took a step back, content to guide the creative process without contributing as much to it. "With Sixpence the package was complete. It's interesting because it was a different dynamic in the studio. Especially with the idea that I was not going to be working on any of the lyrics at all. The only thing I was going to do was be really hard on [guitarist and chief writer] Matt [Slocum] and just keep pushing it further. What was cool was that he was never hummed out about that. He was always keen on making it better."

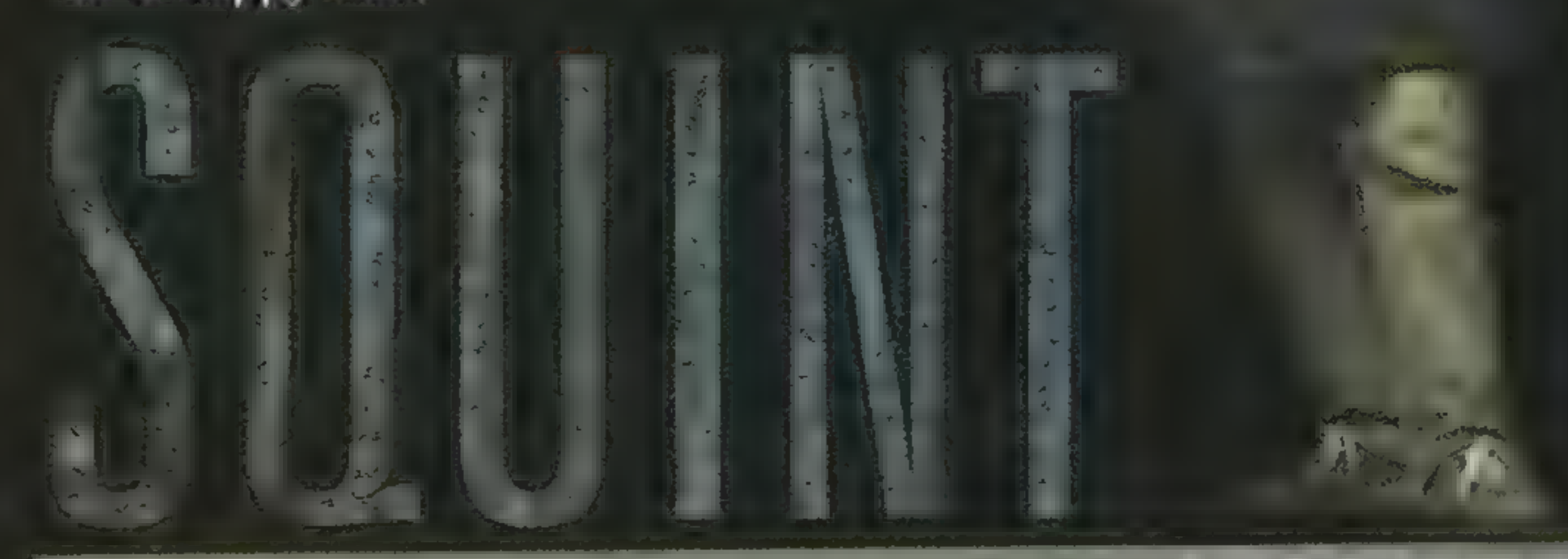
For their part, Sixpence None the Richer deeply admires Taylor for the work he did producing their record. "He was really respectful of what we wanted and didn't want," singer Leigh Nash says. "He stretched everybody. What was really cool is we knew he really loved what we'd done before. It was a nice feeling that he had faith we were going to come up with something good."

The second Squint release was the ska praise & worship album, *The Insyderz Present Skallehua*. Taylor saw the Detroit band in concert and they told him about their idea of doing ska upgrades of praise & worship choruses. "They had been doing it in concert for a while; people really liked it. I went out to California and heard them in the studio. They started playing me the tracks and I lit up from ear to ear. I took the tape home and it's like it just brought me joy every time I put it on. I thought it would be great if we got to spread this to other people."

Because of legal obligations to their previous label, The Insyderz could only sign for the one record; they have since signed with KMG. But the band members are excited to have worked with Taylor. *Skallehua* was always an important project to The Insyderz, trombonist Mike Rowland says. "Even if no label wanted to do it, we would put it out independently. But Squint shared the same vision of ministry we had for this album."

Squint's third act, acoustic art-rockers Burlap to Cashmere, is actually signed to A&M in the general market, but available in the Christian market through Squint. "We saw them in New York at a place called the Bottom Line. Burlap does their set and it's very overt, lyrically. Surprisingly overt. They finish their set and I hear from the next table, *What were those lyrics about? There was some sort of spiritual Christian thing going on.* And the other person says, *How can anyone sing about this Jesus stuff with a straight face?* I realized why this band needs to be on A&M and why they need to be in New York City. I feel privileged that we get to be a part of it."

For many of Taylor's fans, the formation of Squint means the probability of a new Steve Taylor record. He has started work, but he's in no rush; he has a company to run, a movie to shoot and records to produce. "In 10 years, if there's not a lot of bitter ex-Squint artists running around, I'll be a happy man."



Throw it Against the Wall ...

Rob Goraieb of Kosmos Express

Kosmos Express
didn't start playing music because

Looks
of God — but that doesn't mean

to Their
he doesn't play for God

Roots

By J. Edward Keyes

Rob Goraieb is annoyed. "All the bands on the Modern Rock Chart have one hit and they're gone. I hate that. I love The Beatles, but I think in some ways The Beatles were the worst thing for music; they helped a bunch of fat guys with ties who didn't care about music realize they could make a buck."

With *Simulcast*, Goraieb's Kosmos Express defiantly kicks against most current music trends. "We don't care if ska is popular right now," Goraieb says. "We're into The Mod Scene—early Who, Kinks, Beatles, The Jam, Paul Weller. [Kosmos] gets the Oasis/Blur comparison, but only because we have the same influences as those bands."

Goraieb talks passionately about pop music, singing snippets of favorite songs over the phone. "I don't play music because of God," he admits, choosing his words carefully. "Yes, I believe God gave me my gifts—I'd be an idiot not to acknowledge that—but I play music because of The Beatles. I got into a band because I wanted to make music."

But last fall, when it came time to begin work on their soph album, Goraieb was distressed to discover his love of music had vanished. "I would go to record stores and try to listen to everything in the listening booths. I just didn't like any of it. I was sick of music. I was getting into my car and listening to talk radio."

He also cut himself off from past influences, fearing they would color his work. "When Radiohead's record came out, everybody was raving about it. I wouldn't listen to it; I didn't want it to affect me. I wanted this record to be about us."

Goraieb's predicament led him to reinvent the way he wrote songs. Much of



Simulcast was composed off the cuff at rehearsal, Goraieb improvising songs like "On Top of The World" and the rest of the band following his lead. "There's no drums on the bridge to that song because Ron didn't know where I was going with it, so he just stopped playing."

The improvisational approach was also applied to the lyrics—most of which are, at best, enigmatic; at worst, inscrutable. "I've never been good at saying, *I'm gonna write a song about this*. I can't. I don't think what I do is art. I'm good at dummy lyrics. The line *please believe me when I tell you that it's more than I can take/don't forget I don't believe you when you throw it in my face* sounds really thought out; I babbled it off the top of my head. Thank God I had a tape recorder."

In most instances, meaning didn't materialize until after the songs were completed. Goraieb wrote "Gone," the record's lilting centerpiece, with nary a clue to its meaning. When he was invited to play at a Colorado Detention Center, where Goraieb's future father-in-law Nicky Cruz was speaking, the cryptic prose became vested with meaning. "I'm singing the song and most of these guys are sitting there in handcuffs and shackles. Suddenly, I could not believe how every line was meant for them: *place your bets, no regrets, we're told/take the blame, feel the shame, tomorrow/I've already been here so many times*. Most of these guys were repeat offenders. I'm watching them, tears starting to come out of their eyes, and I thought, *My gosh, God, that's what this song is about*."

The second half of *Simulcast* unfolds like a latter day Song of Solomon: "Emotional" and "She's on My Side" put a

human face on Divine love, while "The Way" laments, *Time can make you heal/and words can make you feel, but it's not the same/I want to know the way*.

Goraieb attributes the intermingling themes to his own subconscious meditations on his impending marriage. "This year I fell in love with a girl and I fell in love with God all over again. I think whenever you get to know God better, you learn about yourself more. Try getting engaged—you realize you have stuff in you that's not OK for someone who has to live with you day in and day out."

Despite the strong Christian perspective on *Simulcast*, Goraieb thinks it shouldn't limit the album to the "Christian" market. "I don't even know why there is a Christian market. I don't understand it. Is there a Buddhist market? A Muslim market? Look at Kula Shaker: They're blatant about their Eastern Mysticism, but they're on Sony."

While he dislikes the idea of a "Christian market"—despite the irony that *Simulcast* is on a "Christian" record label—he makes it clear he's not ashamed of Christ. "I'm serious about God. I don't think He's my best friend; He's God. There needs to be respect for that. I'd rather be flipping burgers than make the holy name of God a product to sell."

Although Goraieb believes in his band, he's still practical. "I want this band to happen. When I'm 50 years old, I want to be able to go, *We gave it our best*, regardless of what success we have. I don't think it's art. It's one record among 50 million. But hopefully people will want to listen to it."

After a beat, he wryly adds: "More than those 50 million others." 7

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Party On with THIS TRAIN

By Thompson Ridings-Brooks

The members of This Train blend wit and wisdom to a rockabilly beat

The first thing you notice is the hair. Then, in no particular order, you notice the rockabilly-flavored postpunk dance music, the often sardonic wit and the fact that it's a stand-up bass ringleader Mark Robertson is banging against the stage. On *Mimes of the Old West* they blend self-effacing humor, thoughtful lyrics and a musical blend of surf, punk, honky-tonk and maybe a smidgen of soul.

Robertson and the other members—guitarist Jordan Richter and drummer Cobra Joe—never expected This Train to be more than a hobby. “We started the band as a part-time thing. It was meant to be fun. We felt like as long as it was fun, we would keep it together. I wanted This Train to be like a party and we’re people at the party. However, we’re not more important than anyone else at the party.”

In making *Mimes* they actually threw a party, offering fans a chance to rate the songs being considered for the record. Turns out, the audience rated all the songs fairly highly—so the band still had to make their own decisions what to record after all.

Part of This Train’s leap from indie hobby to national attention is that they were able to grow their fan base while touring with Rich Mullins; Robertson and Richter were a part of Mullins’ Ragamuffin

Band and drummer Cobra Joe worked with the road crew. In fact, one of the tracks on *Mimes*, “A Million Years,” was co-written by Robertson with Mullins, who also sang background vocals on the track.

The Rich Mullins/This Train connection makes sense when you consider Mullins did and This Train continues to stay off the beaten path. However, it hardly prepares listeners for the loopy fun of *Mimes*, from the surf-influenced instrumentals to the odd but insightful observations of the title track to the self-deprecating anthem “We’re Getting Nowhere (Fast).”

But there’s always something to chew on as well. For example, “Missing Link” combines the swagger of bar rock with the ching-ching-chunka-chunka-ching-ching pop of The Monkees—but as you peel back the layers, you find some pretty deep thoughts on faith and theological hair-splitting. “All I know is that Christ touched me and my life was changed,” Robertson says. “I think we make it a lot harder than it needs to be.”

It’s uncanny how the band is able to

“We felt like as long as it was fun, we would keep it together. I wanted This Train to be like a party and we’re people at the party.”

intertwine laughter and light-hearted songs with the seriousness of life’s lessons, effectively balancing the two. “I hope when people see us, they walk away feeling like we really care about them personally,” Robertson says, “that our show was more than just a concert. That’s important to us. What we do is different and we have a lot of energy and silliness. Through that, we ultimately hope people would realize God is bigger than they have sometimes allowed Him to be.”

While the growing legend of This Train keeps the guys pretty busy, they still maintain their outside interests. Robertson appears prominently with the rest of the Ragamuffins (Rick Elias, Jimmy A and Aaron Smith) on the posthumous Rich Mullins album, *The Jesus Record*. Cobra Joe has been seen around the greater Chicago area drumming for The DuValls, a local rockabilly band. Richter, when not recording independent film scores, keeps things under control at Roswell East, the recording studio he and Robertson own.

The future? “World domination, limousines, supermodel girlfriends, the usual,” Robertson says with that deadpan drawl. But, seriously, “We’re just gonna keep doing what we’ve been doing. We never set out to be rock stars. If you see us live, we have a real ax to grind with that whole mentality—Christian bands who try to act like Pearl Jam. I don’t think Christians have the luxury to be rock stars.”



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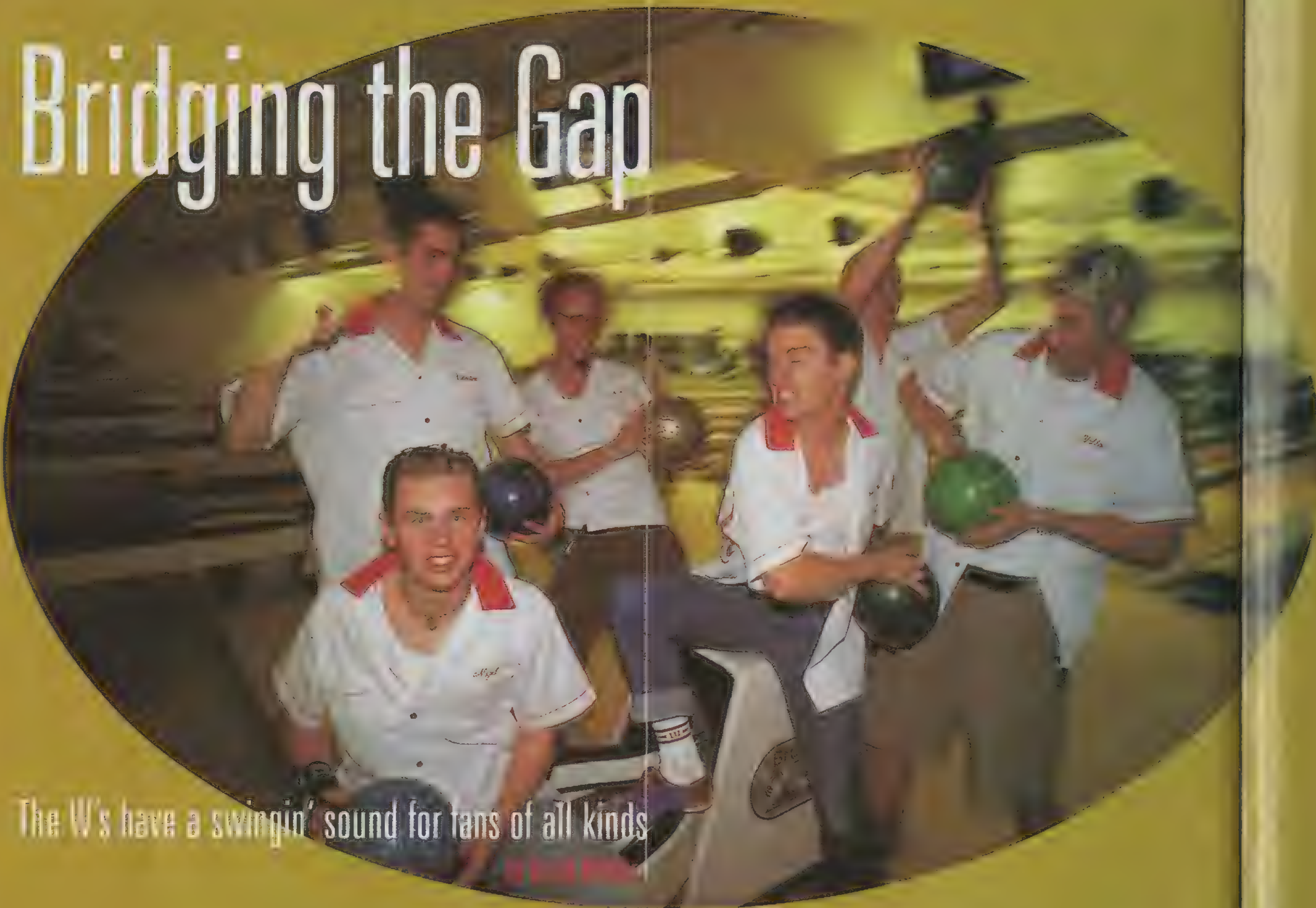
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Bridging the Gap



The W's have a swingin' sound for fans of all kinds

Andrew "Little-A" Schar is a little embarrassed. The lead singer, guitarist, and resident greaser of future rock stars The W's has just finished a dazzling eight-song set that ended with Schar inexplicably running across the stage, tripping on his guitar cord, and falling to the ground with a stage-rattling "thump." After concluding the show with a plea to the audience to "erase that image from your memory," Schar, munching on a blueberry bagel, sits in the band's van with alto sax player James "Yabba" Carter, and drummer Brian "Nigel" Morris.

"We like doing this kind of stuff," Morris says. "This kind of stuff" is a city-wide youth rally of more than 200 teens; the six man ska/swing ensemble has just opened for two large men who are breaking cement blocks with their forearms and

working the audience into near-frenzy with displays of brute strength.

"We just decided we're going to quit the band, because it really doesn't get any better than this," Schar jokes, rubbing his sore hand, a product of his little flying lesson. Joking, as even the most cursory glance at The W's would confirm, is a big part of their lives—but they can be serious when the time calls for it. Thankfully, that time is not now.

With the imminent release of their debut, *Fourth From The Last*, a buzz saturates every energy-filled concert they play. The kids skank and dance like there's no tomorrow. Parents stand off to the side, jaws dropped; this is the kind of music their parents listened to. Indeed, Schar and Morris look like they stepped right out of S.E. Hinton's novel *The Outsiders*, with

their slicked-back hair, rolled-up pant legs, and tucked-in shirts.

In the stylistic vein of such popular mainstream bands as Big Bad Voodoo Daddy and Royal Crown Revue, The W's present a jumping, jazzy sound permeated both with retro sensibility (Schar delivers his lyrics with the swagger of a hepcat) and punk verve (they often do a bouncy cover of a Down By Law song in concert), promising to quench the thirsts of swing fans and ska maniacs alike.

The W's have taken many forms since their inception last year in their hometown of Corvallis, Ore. Originally a guitar-based band that slowly evolved into its present state with the addition of a horn section, they received their big break when asked to open up for Five Iron Frenzy's record release party in November. After wowing

the crowd and selling crateloads of their self-produced demo tape, The W's set off on a Pacific Northwest jaunt with soon-to-be labelmates Five Iron Frenzy.

Schar excuses himself for a couple of minutes. He's been asked to quietly play guitar in the background for an altar call The Power Team has just made. About 50 high schoolers crowd around the stage, eyes closed, some crying, reacting to the powerful testimonies they've been told. Some, no doubt, are considering Christianity. Now, things are serious.

Carter and Morris are now quiet. The way the van is parked behind the makeshift stage, we have a perfect view of the audience. Morris quietly ventures, "Maybe they're thinking to themselves, *What do all these people have?*"

"Oh, definitely," Carter replies. "I think everything we (Christians) do is viewed as second rate; that includes music. It's not unexpected, though. I think the world's view of Christians is understandable."

Part of what makes this so understandable is the Christian music industry's recent slamming of bands that don't always preach from the stage. "The way I look at it is ... whatever you do for your job, anything you do in your life should be a ministry," Carter says. "People just look at it differently because it's a band and you're onstage, but it's the same thing as any other job. If you work at McDonald's or if you're an engineer, and you go to work, the opportunities that are put in front of you, you grab. You don't just walk by and forget about them. You take advantage of them."

We're joined by Schar, tenor sax player Valentine "Val" Hellman, and bass player Todd "The Rodd" Gruener. Trumpet player Brett "Smiley" Barker is out back, selling merchandise. The crowd is dispersing, some picking up pieces of shattered brick, some cautiously migrating to the van in hopes of getting an autograph or meeting the guys.

"Bands like The Supertones have a different goal than us," Hellman explains. "They seem to focus on church people who are having problems and that's great. We have a different goal. We want to reach the kids who don't go for that kind of thing. We want to play a show and be seen as a good band. We're not afraid of being called Christians or of

expressing our beliefs, but we do it in a different way than some people like. By making ourselves accessible to people after the show we feel we can do a better job." And that's what The W's are: accessible. Watching them hang out and talk to the kids after the show is not only refreshing, it's inspiring. As they drive off into the night, you secretly hope they'll be back again.



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There is no significance to the name of the band Bon Voyage—and Jason Martin would rather you didn't ask. He has enough trouble explaining the name of his other band, Starflyer 59. "Everybody always asks about the name. I thought it sounded cool for 1992; it sounds real stupid for 1998. I'm sorry I came up with the name."

You could say the origins of Bon Voyage started about two years ago, when Jason met and started dating a Tooth & Nail Records intern named Julie (whom he affectionately describes as "real cute").

never wanted to sing. I'd get into certain chick bands, like The Cranberries or Daisychain, and thought it was kind of cool to have the girl singer. [But] I couldn't really have just a musical friendship with some girl. It's not my personality. It doesn't work unless I'm married to them."

It didn't take much to convince Julie, a Starflyer fan before the two ever met. "I like to sing his music. If I wasn't in Bon Voyage, I would love the songs because Jason wrote them."

Bon Voyage's lush, self-titled full-length—sticky-sweet pop songs bearing all the trademarks of Jason's flair for melody—is a celebration of all things light and beautiful. Jason's thick walls of rhythm guitar drive the mostly mid-tempo numbers, as Julie's wispy vocals float over the top.

Wobbly strands of keyboard are woven in by producer and mentor Gene Eugene. "I started playing the keyboard licks when we first got in the studio," Jason says. "Gene would be like, *Oh, let me try this one out*. Every time, it sounded 20 times better. After a while, I just stopped trying to give him the plan—I would tell him the chord changes."

Some have suggested that Bon Voyage is little more than Starflyer 59 with female vocals—but they are quite different. Where Starflyer tends to mine darker territory, Bon Voyage is upbeat and sunny. "Certain songs I write for Starflyer, but they don't really fit in,"

BON VOYAGE

Jason says. "Honeymoon' I wrote for Starflyer, but I thought it would sound stupid with me singing it."

While Jason consistently shifts praise from himself to his Creator, some listeners may be troubled to note Bon Voyage is not so explicit. "It makes me feel kinda bad, like maybe I should be singing more about Christ," he says. "A lot of the songs are just me talking to me."

As with most college rock bands, there's not a lot of record sales. Jason still works as a driver for his father's trucking company, taking time off when he needs to tour and record. "Sometimes you feel like, *Oh man, who am I writing these songs for?* The only person who hears them is Julie. Every time I play a song, I'll bring her in the other room and show it to her. I'm thinking, *Too bad nobody in America's ever gonna hear it. I've been working on this thing for five hours*. It gets kind of depressing."

"I always think his demos are the greatest thing on the face of the earth," Julie says. "I love listening to the demos. I wish Jason could do music full-time."

"I've got to keep a full-time job," Jason says. "It gets kind of hectic sometimes, especially now that I've got two bands. Every time I put out a record, there's always the chance something will break through. If it doesn't happen, God willing, I'll be there next year to put out another one."

—J. Edward Keyes

They got to know each other at the video shoot for Starflyer 59's "Housewife Love Song" (in which Julie plays the title character). Julie remembers, "That was the first time Jason and I ever hung out alone; he usually doesn't hang out with girls unless they're his girlfriend. Or wife."

And while few consider marriage a career move, it did give Jason a musical opportunity he'd considered for years. "Ever since I started a band, I



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The Huntingtons from Delaware are not your average Christian punk rock band. First place, they're really good—they rock! Second, you'll discover very quickly, listening to their Tooth and Nail Records debut, *High School Rock*, that the band writes fun, poppy punk songs. Songs that reference very little that is religious or, for that matter, the least bit serious.

It forces one to ask, yet again, what is it that makes a band "Christian." For Cliffy, one of the band's guitarists, it boils down to a simple thing: "We

sage-oriented music, but that's not us. We want to stick to the oldies and the Ramones. When someone tries to force a message into music, it just comes across as lame. It's an undefinable thing, really. To us it just sounds cheesy."

All message music? What about U2's "Sunday Bloody Sunday," that call for Christian brothers to stop fighting each other? "Good song, that's not cheesy," admits Cliffy. "When it comes to our band, it's not about ministry at all. But, on a personal level, I want to have God's love in my heart and show that to people in real and profound ways. The people I know who've gotten saved for real, they were hurting and there were people around them who loved them. They saw something they wanted, and they were open and you could tell them about the love of Christ."

He acknowledges that for many it's the lyrics that make music "Christian"—but that's not where he is. "We're just a band, we don't have pretensions about being a 'Christian' band. At the same time, we are a Christian band; every single one of us is saved. We're the regular, East-coast Bible-belt kind of guys. We really are. Most Christian music is just about church and, personally, I'm just not that into American Christianity, since Americans get it wrong so much of

the time. It's so much more than going to church on Sunday and giving money, but so many people don't get beyond that.

"I don't claim to get everything right. I'm just a regular guy. I read my chapter from the Bible every night, and I try to keep my relationship with God strong; we all do. We try to keep people in the band who have a love for Christ. I guess it's hard for people to make sense of the lyric thing—that we're Christians but our songs are about everyday kinds of things. It just felt a lot more real to us, when we decided to write regular, normal songs about life."

Well, real life if you're in high school. "We get this thing about being a girly band," Cliffy says. "On our first album there were like eight songs with *she* in the title. On the second album there were 14 songs and I think 10 were about girls. This one has sixteen songs, it clocks in at 32 minutes, and I think it's like six or seven that have anything to do with females at all, so now we're writing about high school and stuff like that. People who believe in God do not need to be told to believe in God. What they need is either songs about growing in their faith or songs about going to the movies. Ours are about going to the movies."

—Brian Quincy Newcomb

HUNTINGTONS

hate message-oriented music. Rock 'n' roll, to us, is like '50's music, 'Wake Up Little Susie' and all that stuff. Those songs, 'Jimmy Mack, you better hurry back' and stuff like that, there's no message other than the simplistic *I like you, you like me* kind of thing."

What may work for other bands, says Cliffy, just isn't right for the Huntingtons. "We would feel really cheesy with Stryper lyrics, as much as I love Stryper; I have all their records. I actually own a lot of mes-



bank shots bank shot

THE HALO FRIENDLIES

Sure, the last few years have produced a proliferation of female-fronted bands, but there hasn't been an all-girl Christian rock band in the spotlight since Rachel Rachel broke up years ago. Enter The Halo Friendlies.

Formed near the end of 1996, The Halo Friendlies began writing songs and honing their musicianship. The Friendlies—Cheryl Hecht, guitars and vocals; Judita Wignall, guitars; Natalie Bolanos, bass; Deanna Moody, drums (they all sing lead and backing vocals)—hit on a variety of styles, from '90s/retro new wave (like Elastica) to pure pop punk (MxPx, Green Day), riot grrl (Sleater-Kinney) to indie pop (the Breeders, Talulah Gosh). "I think there is no way you can pinpoint and say, *This is an all punk band, this is an all pop rock band*," Hecht says. "This is a diverse band, and that is what we want."

"When you hear a lot of stuff going on on this album, it kind of takes you by surprise," Wignall says. "It's mellow and gets fast again. I like the fact that every song has its own personality."

Hecht and Wignall wrote most of the songs, with Bolanos and Moody building on the melody adding bass lines and drum parts. There has been a rumor—perhaps because of the band's gender, perhaps because Wignall's husband heads the record label—that the members of The Halo Friendlies didn't write the songs or play on the record. Well, they did. And you can see for yourself as they hit the festival circuit this summer. "Yeah, we do have something to prove," Moody says. "We aren't stupid enough to ask to have someone to play our instruments on the record, and then go and



play in front of people and to actually tour—I mean, *Hello!*" "I am excited because the guys help us load our equipment," Bolanos jokes.

"Yeah," Moody jumps in, "this is Natalie: *Hey you want to be a part of a unique ministry? OK, load our stuff.*"

The Friendlies agree they are in a unique position. They don't consider themselves a ministry band, but desire to be an example to female fans. "We don't want to come off just being a cute band," Hecht says. "We have something to say."

"We know this is a ministry," Moody says. "There is accountability. Our personal life with the Lord is going to reflect on how we are outside the van. It is one challenge after another. God is going to really use us mightily; it is a total blessing."

—Chris M. Short

HUMAN

1992. The hot and humid metropolis of Houston, Texas. After years of involvement in mainstream music, bassist Vic Sapp desired to play music which would touch people for the Lord, making them realize their basic human need for a Savior. That desire comes through clearly on the Human debut *Out of the Dust*, a futuristic and inventive concoction of thick, groove-laden, hook-rich rock 'n' roll with plenty of distortion.

The band—Sapp; drummer Erick Garcia; lead vocalist Randy Kinnett; guitarist Carl Sapp (Vic's younger brother); rhythm guitarist Dean Martin Vanderwoude—teamed up with producers Dino Elefante and Billy Smiley. As the band has gelled in the years between Sapp's revelation and their debut—they've cut their teeth opening for such notables as Audio Adrenaline and Geoff Moore and the Distance, among others.

They also spent time changing their image. "We went through several hairstyles," Sapp. "Randy used to have hair down to the middle of his back. We decided to go for the modern look, and he got the hairstylist to whack it. We have it in a ponytail hanging on the wall in our rehearsal room."

One image Human has not tried to alter is that of being a show band. While most modern rock acts have run away from presenting elaborate stage shows, Kinnett explains that Human has done the opposite. "For a long time, we toted around \$15,000 worth of stage lights. The kids went berserk. Several people commented that some of these kids who are Generation X-ers have no clue what a real show is like. They're used to guys coming out



in their oil-change-shop outfits and standing behind a microphone for an entire hour. What we're trying to do is bring these kids music that is completely relevant with a show to back it. If you pay money, you want to see something."

Human's goals go way beyond \$15,000 light systems, a wall of Marshall stacks and Intellabeams. "We feel that we need to be relevant and a cut above in our performance and our sound," Kinnett says. "Spiritually, we know, without any doubt, that we've been called to be disciples first in our own lives. Secondly, we've been called to share with people that they are valuable and worthy to have a relationship with the living God, who laid His life down on the cross simply to have a relationship with them."

—Thompson Ridings-Brooks

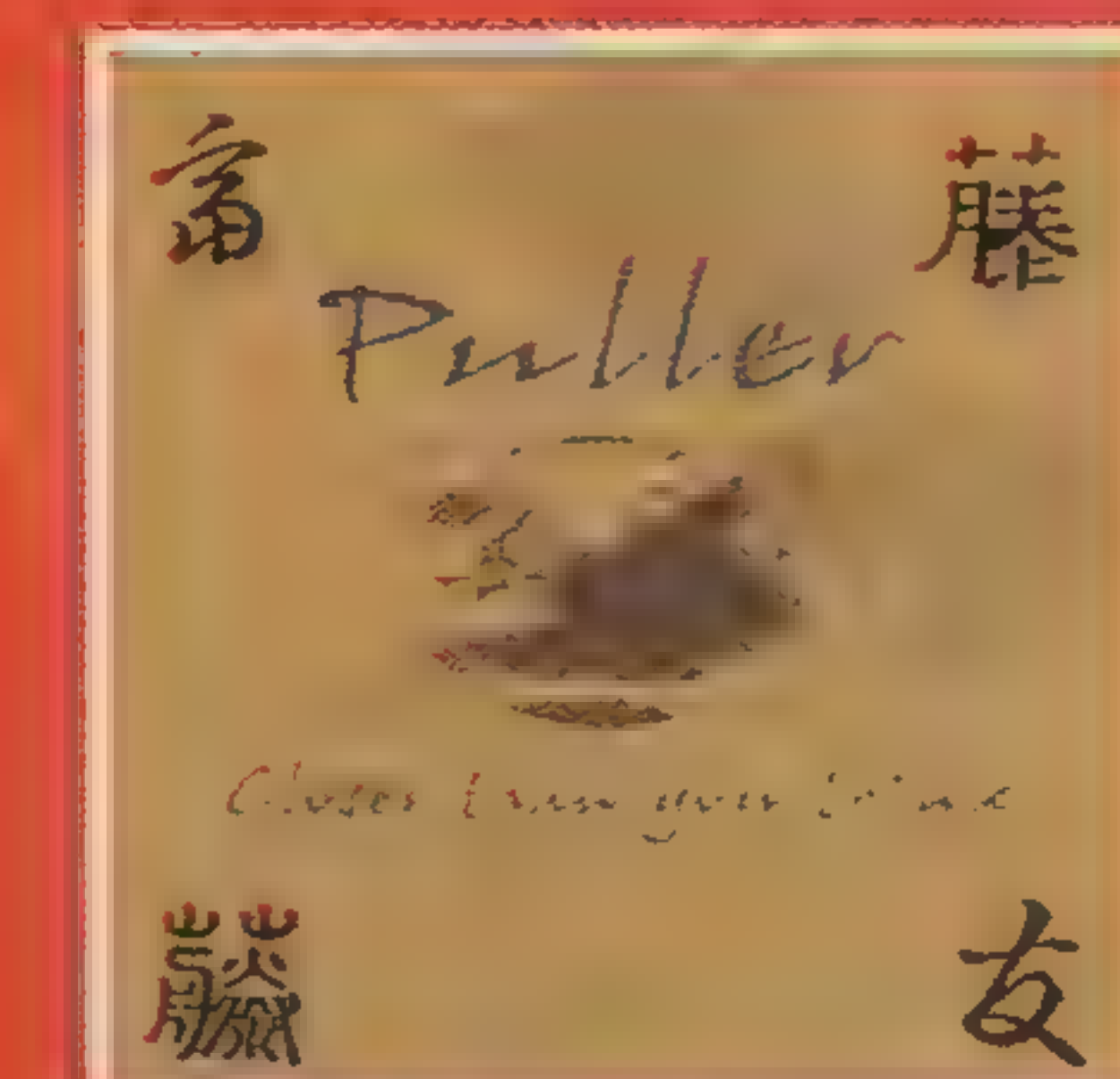
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With the whiteboy reggae of the band Sublime selling records by the truckload, it seems about time The Dingeess would make it. Originally a side project of now-labelmates The Supertones, they blend tight pop-punk with traditional roots reggae



and ska, for a sound not unlike Hepcat (who lend their horn section for a couple of songs) or The Skatalites. Lead singer and songwriter Pegleg has an uncanny gift for insightful lyrics. Addressing such problems as racial stereotypes and drug abuse through the eyes of inner city youth, his knack for truly intelligent social observations is a talent that is not wasted through the 11 songs that make up *Armageddon Massive*. Standouts include the dancehall swagger of "Could Be Worse" (*It's no wonder they'll amount to nothing ... they've been told they're just a product of chance*) with its smooth organ and well-placed horn section, and the inspiring, marching "Rebel Youth," the kind of song that could become someone's anthem. They attack pop culture in the fast, pounding album opener "Ghetto Box Smash" and talk about the importance of standing up for yourself in "Another Burnin' City" (*the less that you push, the more they can pull ... you'll break the mold if you start to grow*). This is a truly thought-provoking album, and one that establishes The Dingeess' place in the musical revolution to come.

—Derek Walker

Delirious

King of Fools
Sparrow Records

The passionate, fiery, 5-piece British group who made waves across the Pacific among youthful, bouncing, moshed audiences is back. Fans might be surprised to discover the praise & worship sticker has all but fallen off Delirious's latest, *King of Fools*. Yet, a heart of praise still permeates the ripping guitar and exploding melodies. Delirious is raw and real about their relationship with God. Beneath a big list of songs, including winners "All The Way" and "History Maker," are five guys trying to follow Christ. They look at the pain, hope, love and struggle that accompany living in our modern, issue-laden world without getting hooked into the common trappings of bitterness, resentment and rebellion. Lyrics fluctuate between simple praise and serious reflection. The result is a contagious, compelling album without the dime store lyrics. "Revival Town" is a contempo-pop smash loaded with punchy guitars and kicking keyboards. The catchy title chorus bounces between lead vocalist dia-



logue and down-home instrumental mixes. "White Ribbon Day"—an earnest petition to end political violence—mirrors U2's all-too-familiar "Sunday Bloody Sunday." The band's evolution in its rock style is apparent in "Promise," with ragged, brash vocals and blistering guitars. Next to the introspective, piano opener of "King or Cripple," it's no doubt Delirious has undergone sonic maturity. Don't be

deceived by the quiet intro; the cut is a screamer. *King of Fools* ain't no chapel music. This stuff targets a hurt and dying world with an undying message of hope.

—Margaret Feinberg

Scott Faircliff

Scott Faircliff
Organic



It's always great to find a smart songwriter who keeps his balance. As it says in Ecclesiastes 7:16-18, it's important to keep your balance—God is Lord over all of our lives, not just the "religious" parts. Some Christian songwriters waste their time on spiritually shallow bumper-sticker slogans spring-loaded with the name of Jesus; some overreact and spend all their creative energy on songs that speak truly of the human condition, but without eternal perspective. Scott Faircliff's songs of spiritual hope and physical need, coated warmly in memorable, often bitter-sweet melodies, strike a near-perfect balance. Tracks like the sauntering "Pulling Me Closer" and the catchy, rockin' "Wrecking Ball Chain" are inventive praise songs, reminders that the Lord is calmly ever-present in our lives. The jangly "Frog's Lament" is an honest, light-hearted anthem for anyone who's ever felt unrequited love. The real standout is "Ultimate Sign": Recalling John Lennon with its amazing melodic sense, jaded rhythmic bounce and delicate harmonies, the song speaks of the importance of including the Lord's will in our romantic entanglements. *Scott Faircliff* is a must-have for any music fan looking for a little balance and a lot of brilliance.

—Chris Well

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Project 86

Project 86
BEC

Although it borrows its rhyming cadences from hip-hop, Project 86 bellows its lyrics over incessantly eerie guitar riffs with all the raw power of a hungry young punk band, which leaves its eponymous debut sounding closer to the



hardcore end of the emerging musical style known as rap-core. Besides its musical inclinations, though, there is also far too much turbulence in these soapbox rants to ever induce you to 'raise your hands in the air, and wave 'em like you just don't care.' The album's closing thought is "When Darkness Reigns." This climate of pitch-black blindness strongly influences Project 86's mostly gloomy lyrical perspective. Happy-happy, joy-joy, this ain't. The album oozes with a strong sense of mental claustrophobia, and statements such as "Stalemate" speak about the kind of inertia so often experienced by those who are stuck between two mutually exclusive spiritual worlds without any clue where to go next. It's as if they're just waiting for someone to shout "Checkmate! Game over." Members of Project 86 may not be a clean-cut quartet of shiny happy people, but this motley crew excels at its craft by specializing in a brand of loud and angry music; a kind perfectly suited for shouting back at the devil.

—Dan MacIntosh

Hydro

Aborigination
N-Soul

Those under the impression dance music is a one trick pony, restricted to technobabble and "get the people moving" rave anthems, will be pleasantly surprised by Hydro, the production collaboration of Robbie Bronnimann and Ray Goudie. On *Aborigination*, the duo's long-awaited sequel to *Spiritualization*, Hydro marries globe-spanning instrumentals to hard dance beats to present a thoroughly enjoyable sophomore effort. *Aborigination* begins with an ominous synthesizer peppered with pounding jungle percussion and a voice repeatedly whispering "breathe." Out of nowhere, a woman screams and a pummeling groove erupts from the speakers, signaling the triumphant entrance of the title track. From there, the album establishes itself as a consistent journey, from the Crystal Method-like synth gurgles of "Liquid Prayers" (augmented with operatic Russian vocals and a violin solo that would make Jars of Clay turn green with envy) to the thumping drum-n-bass groove of



"Crystal Throneroom" that, with dba's Shaz Spark's strong vocal performance, is easily a highlight. "Push" sports a funky, elastic bass line, while "Serengeti Storm" is a mysteriously soothing mixture of African chants and a tight tribal pulse threaded together with a gloriously airy keyboard. With 12 tracks clocking in at just under 70 minutes, *Aborigination* is a step above the ambient textures of *Spiritualization*. It's a multicultur-

al, rhythmic celebration, and another victory in N-Soul's campaign to bring legitimate dance music to the gospel market.

—Derek Walker

Frodus

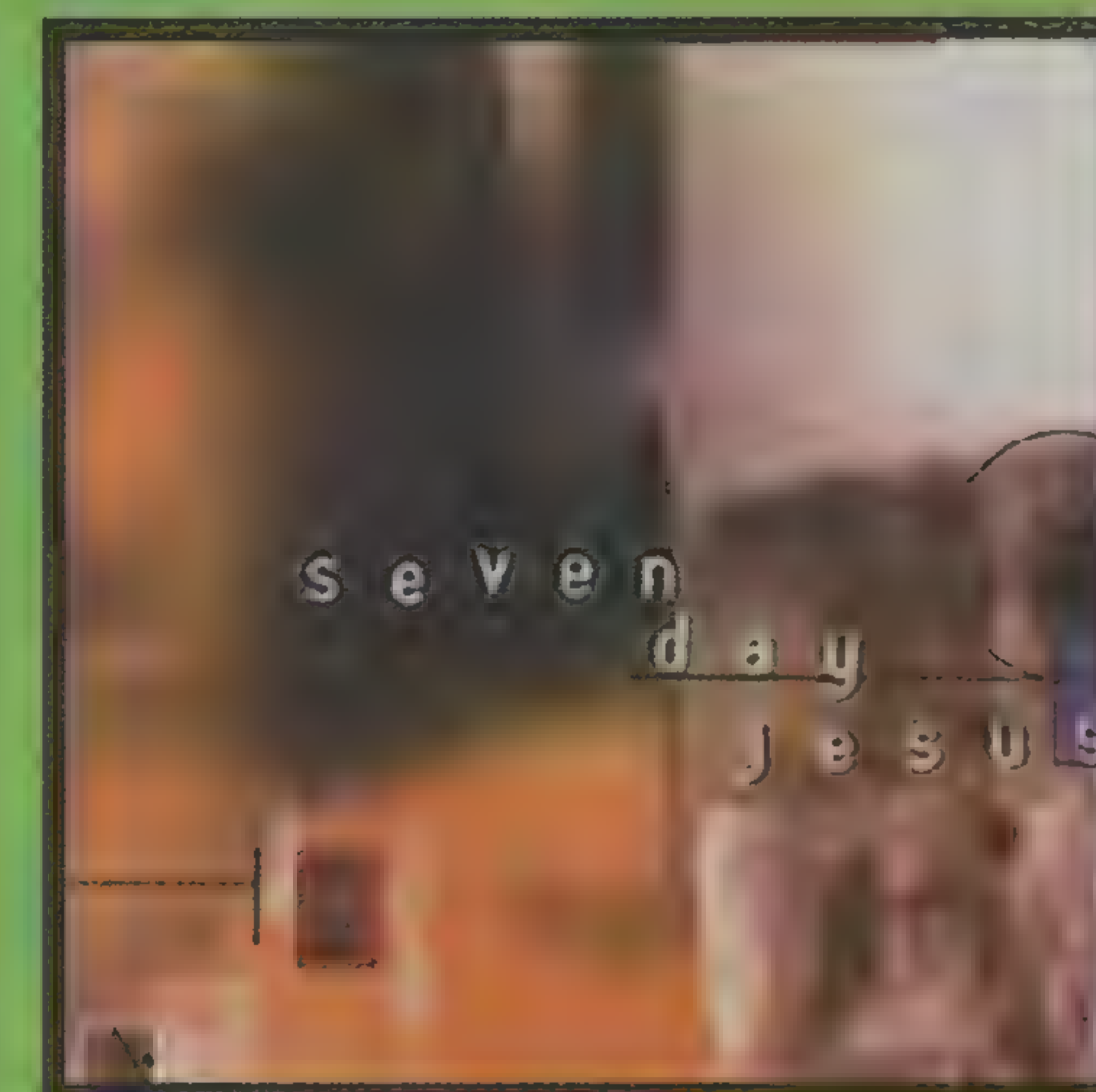
Conglomerate International
Tooth & Nail

Futuristic? Yes. Space pop? Not even close. Frodus creates an unnerving blend of hyper-energetic punk rock and tight, intricate



hardcore for a style that is truly their own. On their Tooth & Nail debut *Conglomerate International*, this three piece literally explodes with aggression and energy, while attempting to warn the people of what is to come. Screamed, ominous lyrics (such as "control is always automatic," from the sprawling "Invisible Time Lines") bring to mind such unsettling works as *1984* and *Brazil*, while Jason Hamacher's staccato drumming and Nathan Burke's pounding bass lines anchor this pulsating sound to the ground. Shelby Cinca's guitar playing (and his impassioned screaming) blends with the others to make for a truly inspiring, not to mention scary, record. Starting off with the harsh punk squalor of "Intention: Removal," Frodus makes good on their promise to spread the word about the future. Describing a bleak society that only ends in destruction, this songwriting is the type that is bound to make youth pastors and Christian bookstore owners everywhere more than a little nervous, and I can't blame them. *Conglomerate International*

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"down with the ship"
"everybody needs love"

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7.10	willmar, MN	sonshine festival
7.17	lincoln, NH	festival
7.25	george, WA	creation west 98
7.26	central point, OR	jackson county fair
8.1	monterey, CA	spirit west coast
8.8	wheaton, IL	world festival
8.22	lanaster, PA	purple door festival
8.27	darien lake, NY	kingdom bound
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is disturbing, and that's what makes it so interesting. Any band that can cover Devo's "Explosions" with such fierce stamina is a band to look out for. Hardcore is an old wheel, and I'll be darned if Frodus hasn't reinvented it to near-perfection. Big Brother is watching, and if he's smart, he's got his eye on Frodus.

—Derek Walker

Eric Champion

Natural
Essential

How many times has somebody told you to "act natural"? Sounds like good advice, doesn't it? Eric Champion begs to differ. His new



album, *Natural*, argues that not only is this opening statement bad grammar, it's also deceptively bad advice. Acting naturally involves following what our nature tells us to do. But because our untrustworthy nature is a flawed piece of equipment, such behavior leads to a world filled with the kind of malfunctioning beings we see each morning in the mirror. Champion's latest acts as a laundry list of such dysfunctional traits: "Am I Looking Good?" reeks with vanity; "Just Me" stinks of envy; the title track speaks of how any honest fight against our natural impulses is often a losing battle (*Between my conscience and my flesh/My flesh always wins*). The only truly poor selection is "Hacker's Prayer," which uses a too obviously convenient computer metaphor to describe the receipt of God's love. But this is a small complaint, and only shows up as a tiny bug in an otherwise nearly

flawless program. Champion's musical neighborhood consists of applying asphalt-thick guitar parts for the music's foundation, then allowing keyboard steps to hopscotch all over the mix. The end result is a playground symphony with a modern edge. His vocals often pass on straight singing—whenever a good snarl feels better—and this musical characterization he's created comes off sounding much like a snotty and spoiled little child. This character-acting is all intentional, since each of us would grow up just like that selfish little brat, if the Creator had not first instilled within us a little of His own charitable nature.

—Dan MacIntosh

Newsboys

Step Up to the Microphone
Star Song

Although youth groups nationwide have regularly mistaken Newsboys for an "alternative" band—must be the accents—the band has usually been sneered at by true modern rock fans for their reliance on flash and smoke; their best moments were chalked up to the influence of mentor and producer Steve Taylor. With the bold and refreshing *Step Up to the Microphone*, Peter Furler and the band seem to have grabbed hold of their artistic destinies. Furler, in fact, steps out from under the shadow of producer Taylor and former lead singer John James (hence the album



title's double meaning). Highlights include the loping jangle and deliciously non-ska blurring of horns on "Step Up to the Microphone"; the

dramatic tension of the poppish "Entertaining Angels"; the rich, full sound and bittersweet guitars of "Believe"; and the dark, angular "WooHoo."

—CsW

Rick Elias

Rick Elias and The
Confessions/Ten Stories
KMG Classic Archives



Rick Elias' first two albums appeared without much fanfare, just as the hairspray-drenched '80s were coming to a close. Nonetheless, listeners seeking more than pompadour and circumstance were drawn to his autobiographical songs of faith, his ragged rasp of a voice, and his fresh combination of poetic lyrics and soulfully played guitar rock. When these first notes of Elias' "Confession of Love" shook speakers into splinters to begin his band's self-titled debut, it was a joyous cry heard by only a smattering of fortunate bystanders. A year later—in 1991—follow-up *Ten Stories* overflowed with memorable gut-checks, like "I Wouldn't Need You (Like I Do)" and "When You Lose Someone You Love," unflinchingly honest tales. On the heels of Elias' recent *Blink*, these two ground-breaking musical vehicles are being road tested again. Here's your chance to take a break from speeding down the generic mainstream highway. Instead, let Elias take you on a richly rewarding detour through the unique back roads of his world.

—Dan MacIntosh

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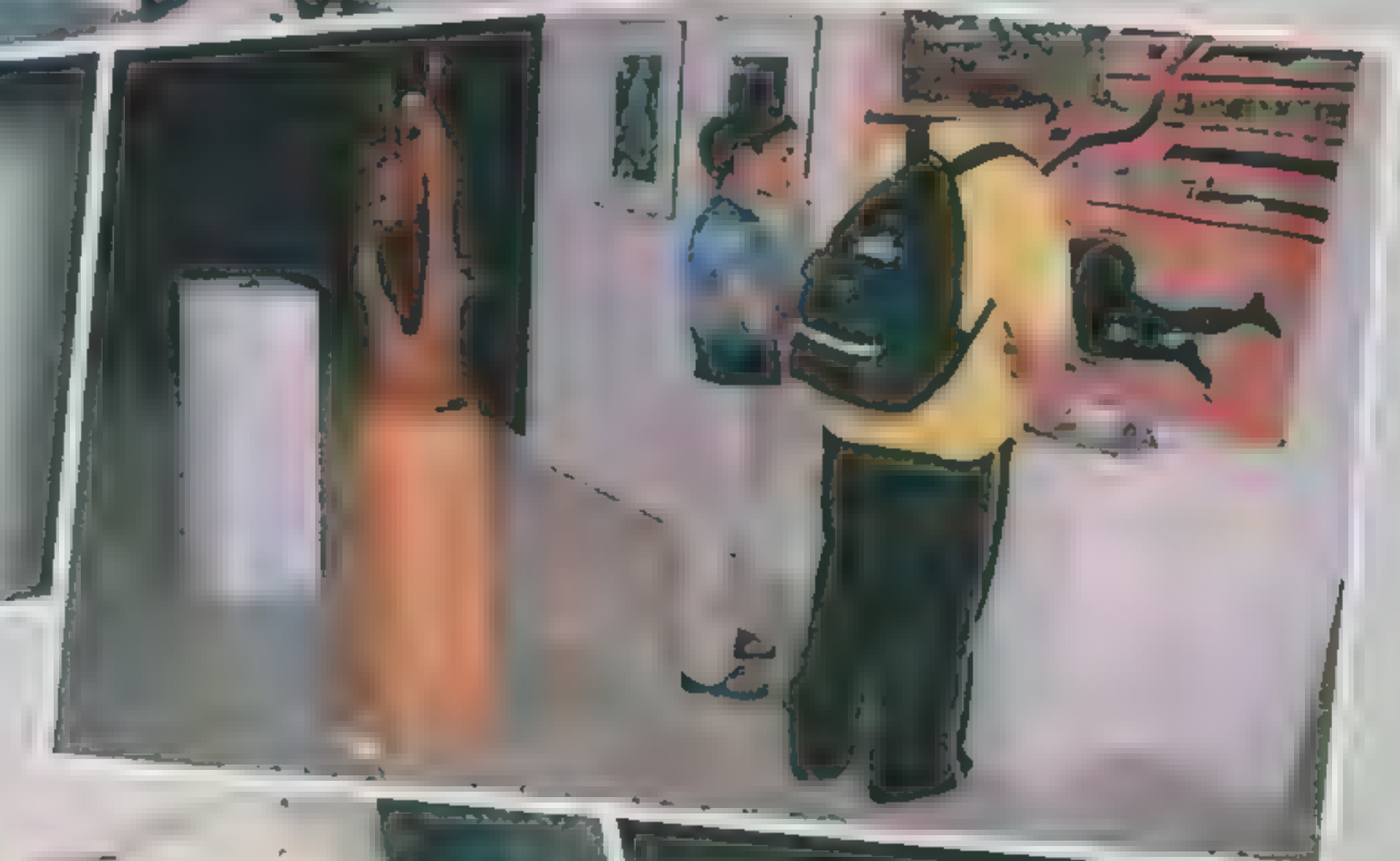
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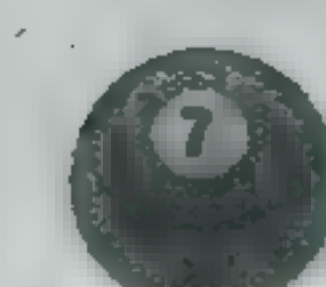
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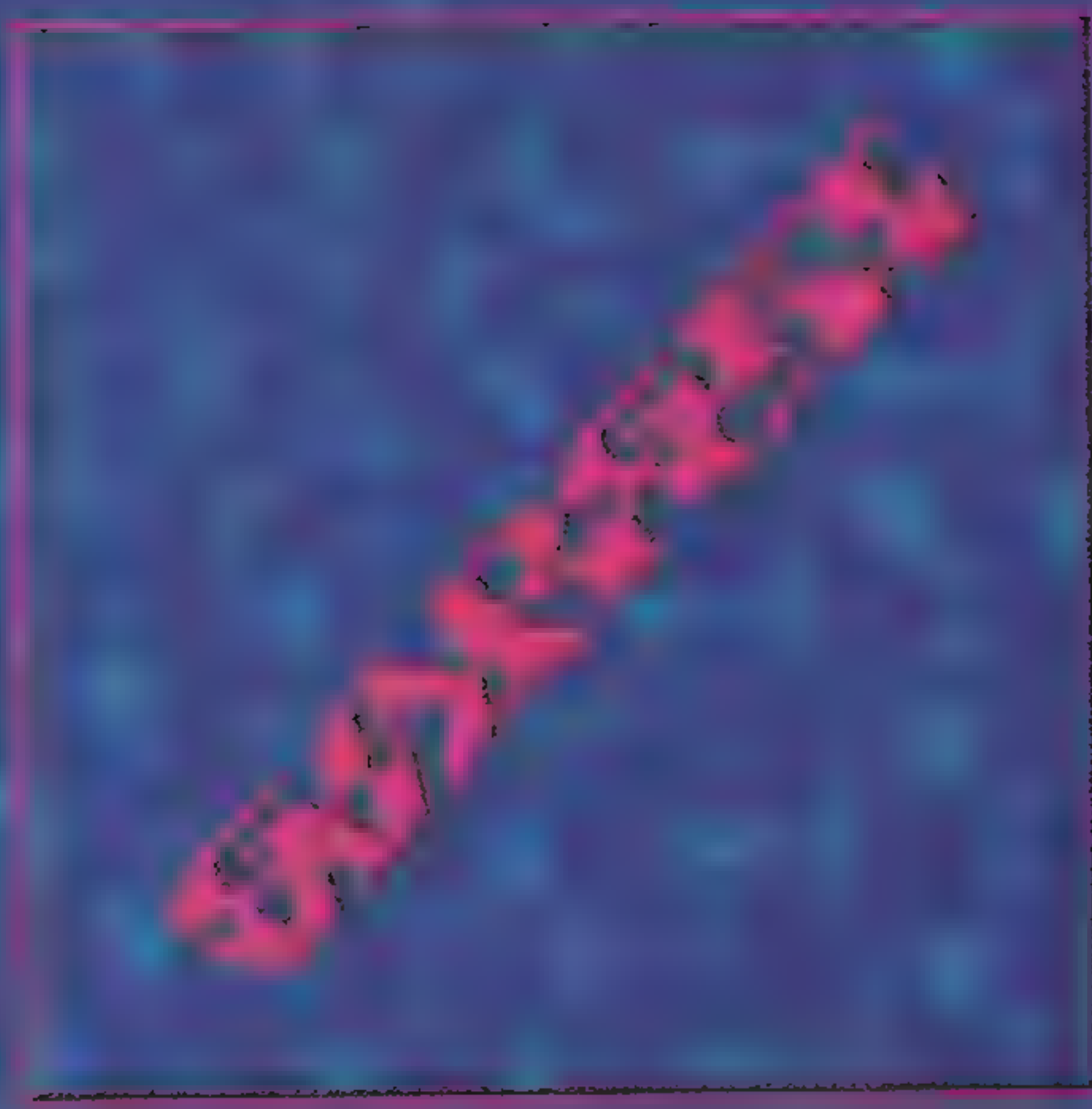
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Epiphone introduces new guitar and bass models for 1998. New bass models include the EB-0, the Ripper, the EB-1 and the Les Paul Deluxe bass. New Les

great choice for the beginner. The Ripper bass features a maple body with a maple, bolt-neck and 2 pickups for a punchy, powerful sound. It has a large but thin body for excellent balance with light weight. Originally introduced by Gibson in 1953, the versatile Epiphone EB-1 can be



EB-0 Bass

Paul models include the Les Paul Studio, the Les Paul Studio Pearl, the Les Paul Deluxe and the Les Paul '56 Goldtop.

The EB-0 Bass features the SG body shape and a super slim neck. This short-scale bass is a

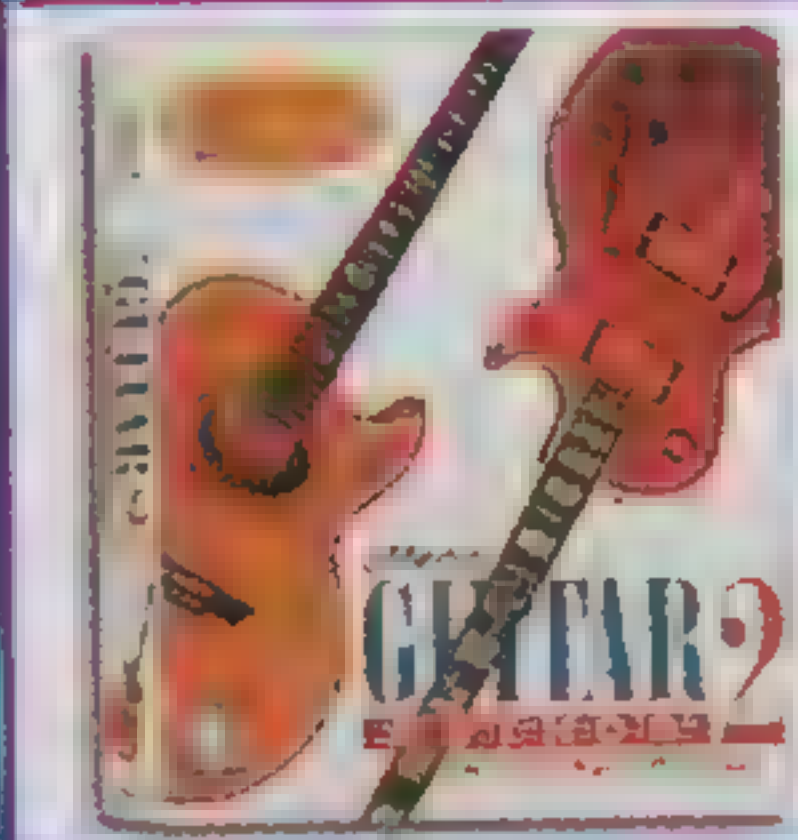


EB-1 Bass

played horizontally or vertically,

with one's fingers or a bow. It also features the original, fully adjustable 3-point bridge.

The Les Paul Deluxe bass has the classic Les Paul carved body with a flamed maple top. This is a great looking bass at an Epiphone price. The Les Paul Studio and Studio Pearl



retain classic Les Paul styling with a set neck. The '56 Les Paul Goldtop emulates the vintage look and sound. This Les Paul has the classic Goldtop finish, a set neck, and Cream Soap Bar P-90 pickups.

[www.gibson.com]

eMedia Corporation announces the release of **Guitar Method 2**, the sequel to their revolutionary eMedia Guitar Method CD-ROM. **Guitar Method 2** provides new learning material, supported by outstanding and diverse song content, as well as dynamic new features. The disk includes six chapters containing 60 comprehensive lessons that

teach various techniques. Lessons explore



topics such as melodic solos, barre chords, rhythm guitar, fingerstyle and scales/modes. Built in accessories include an automatic tuner, recorder and metronome.

[www.emedia.org]

Audio-Technica is targeting a new group of musicians with their affordable 30 Series. Initially, three models comprise the series of con-



denser mics which will find themselves at home on stage and in the studio. Potential usage applications include vocals, acoustic instruments, electric guitar cabinets and drum overheads. Audio-Technica also manufactures high quali-

ty wireless systems and phono cartridges. [www.audio-technica.com]

The latest MiniDisc (MD) audio system from **Sharp Electronics**, the MD-X8, connects to your PC and digitally downloads and stores online audio to a recordable MD. The computer connection is made using an optional PCM-CIA-card adapter and cable. Once connected, the PC becomes the command center where users can control the minisystem's many functions, such as play, record and volume. Additionally, tracks can be titled and edited directly from the keyboard. Select tracks can be obtained from one of the many online CD retailers for as little as 99 cents. [www.sharp-usa.com]

BOSS is now shipping the Dr. Sample SP-202 16-bit sampler. While the obvious use of the features relate to a DJ setting, another application of this neat little box is apparent. The SP-202 has the ability to time stretch a sample without affecting pitch. Users

can capture an intricate musical section, and slow it down with the time stretch function. The amazing part is the original pitch is retained so you can figure out the section in the correct key! The time stretch function, along with all the other features of the SP-202 make it a very cool addition to the vast array of products from BOSS. [www.rolandus.com]

Power amplifier manufacturer **Crown**, seen on many of the largest tours, introduces their most affordable line of amplifiers ever, the CE series. Originally demonstrated inside the Crown semi at the LA NAMM show, both models of the professionally featured amplifiers show they can deliver the clear highs and chest-slamm-ing lows on which Crown's reputation has been built. [www.crownaudio.com]

—Dale Wilstermann

Send materials for this column to Dale c/o Gadget Watch, 7ball magazine, 2525-C Lebanon Pike, Box 6, Nashville, TN 37214.

Ten: The Birthday Album

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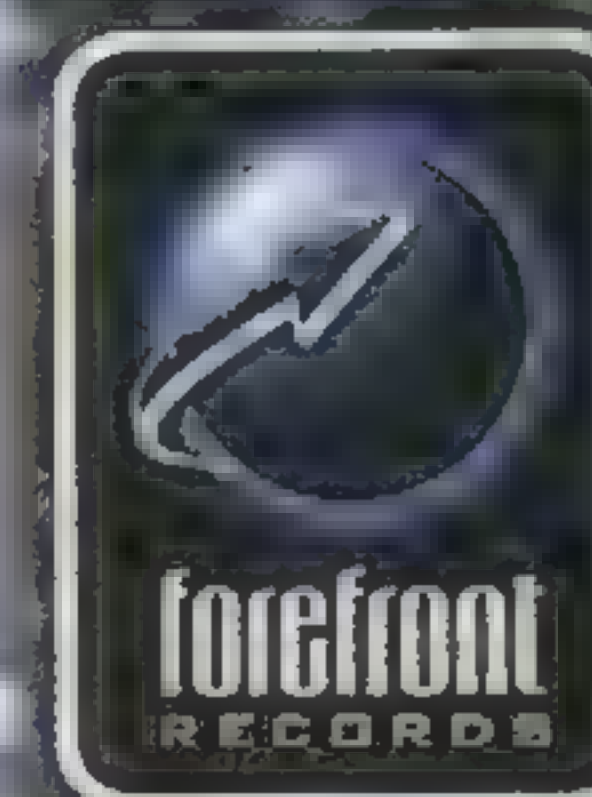
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HISTORY Bloodgood

Bloodgood / Detonation

Attend the rock stage at any Christian festival this summer and you're going to hear loud, hard rockin' bands sharing music that delivers the Gospel without apology or defensiveness. It wasn't always that way—veteran Christian rockers like Rez Band, Stryper, and Seattle's sacred metal warriors Bloodgood, kicked down the barriers for Christian artists making relevant musical contributions that matched the world's in intensity, musicality, volume and theatricality.

Bloodgood bounded on to the national stage with its 1986 self-titled debut, produced by Darrell Mansfield, another early veteran of Christian rock. *Detonation* arrived a year later, followed by yearly full-length studio releases and national touring, and eventually a two album/video collection that captured the band's multimedia vision with the help of actors, dancers and visual effects, *Alive in America* and *Shakin' the World*.

Not surprisingly, much of the strongest and most effective material from Bloodgood came from those first two albums, now repackaged and re-released on one disc by KMG.

Bloodgood's "look" had a lot in common with pop/metal spandex and hair bands of the '80s, Poison, Ratt and the like. However, the band found its unique musicality in the strong vocal presence of Les Carlsen, the propulsive rhythm and songwriting chops of bassist Michael Bloodgood, and the unique virtuoso guitar heroics of David Zaffiro.

The first album was filled with warnings about the prevailing darkness in the world around about us, an invitation to believers and non-believers alike to "Awake!" Those who "Stand in the Light" will keep a "Demon on the Run." As a "Soldier of Peace," we are "Killing

the Beast," the dark one, "Black Snake."

Bloodgood took the very themes of secular metal—but instead of glorying in the images of demons, monsters and ghouls, they celebrated the life, light and hope in the person of the Christ. Often echoing Scripture, they affirmed again and again, *Greater is He who is in me, than he who is in the world*. To metal fans familiar with the work of Ozzy Osbourne and others, Bloodgood's radical proclamation of Christian faith had surprising force and power. "Accept the Lamb" declared the grace-filled activity of the Living God.

With *Detonation* the sound got bigger, bolder and stronger (if you can imagine that), but the message was closer to home and, if possible, more personal. They continued with "The Battle of the Flesh," carrying over the theme of the first album through to issues of "Self-Destruction" and "Alone in Suicide," only to move on to a series of songs built around Passion Week. "Eat the Flesh" looks at the Last Supper with vivid clarity, "Holy Fire" describes the purpose that filled Christ and carried Him through the judgment and passion, where those who had followed him would cry out to "Crucify." In the end, Jesus is revealed as "The Messiah," a "Live Wire" to connect us with God's healing, forgiving love.

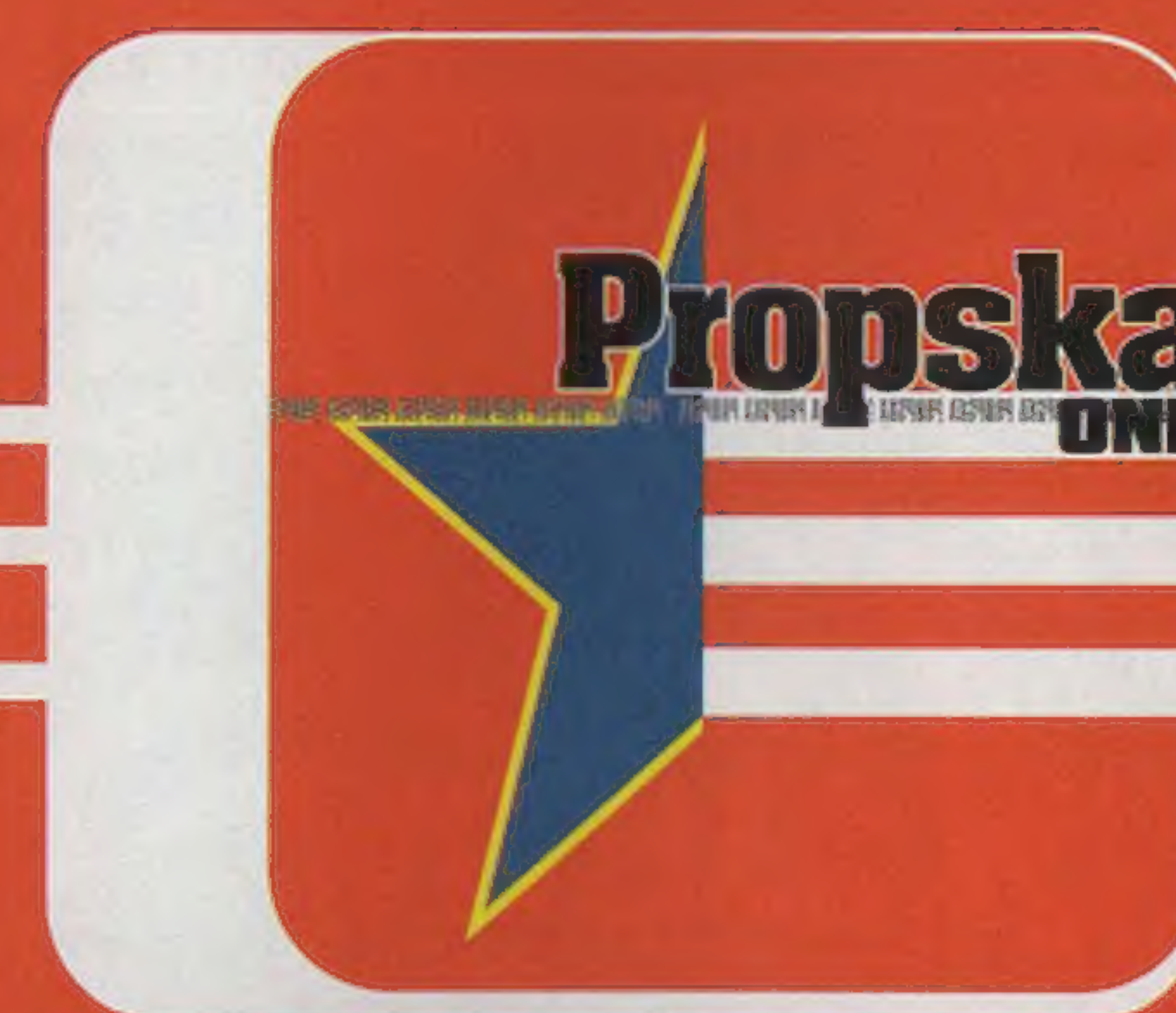
Strongly biblical language flows through Bloodgood's lyrics, while the music seeks to project the drama of the story, matching the passion and import of these events. Bloodgood's ministry and music was a vital stepping stone in the maturing process of Christian rock; later these very songs would be re-shaped into a live rock opera of sorts, recalling the redemptive history of Jesus' last days, to be played out dramatically on concert stages and the live concert video.

These first two albums—available after years out of print—will refresh old fans' memories, while listeners new to Christian rock's harder side will want to hear what ignited the current explosion.

—Brian Quincy Newcomb



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PROPSKA ONE

Rock

- 1 SEVEN DAY JESUS
Down With The Ship
(Forefront)
- 2 THIRD DAY
Have Mercy (Reunion)
- 3 GRAMMATRAIN
Pain (Forefront)
- 4 SUPERTONES
Little Man (BEC)
- 5 THE INSYDERZ
Awesome God (Squint)
- 6 AUDIO ADRENALINE
Blitz (Forefront)
- 7 MISS ANGIE
Hands (Myrrh)
- 8 PLANKEYE
Sterling (BEC)
- 9 SKILLET
Hey You, I Love Your Soul
(Forefront)
- 10 SEND THE BEGGAR
Tangled With The Error
(Rustproof)
- 11 SIXPENCE NONE THE RICHER
Movin' On (Squint)
- 12 ALL STAR UNITED
Angels (Reunion)
- 13 HUMAN
Read Your Mind (Organic)
- 14 ONEMAN
Peacehopejoy (Absolute)
- 15 LLOYD
Fish On The Ocean
(Organic)

MODERN

- 1 SUPERTONES
Little Man (BEC)
- 2 THE INSYDERZ
Awesome God (Squint)
- 3 SILAGE
Jesus Is My Best Friend
(Sub-Lime)
- 4 MISS ANGIE
Hands (Myrrh)
- 5 SEVEN DAY JESUS
Down With The Ship
(Forefront)
- 6 PLUMB
Concrete (Essential)
- 7 BLEACH
Cannonball (Forefront)
- 8 PLANKEYE
Sterling (BEC)
- 9 SWITCHFOOT
Underwater (re:think)
- 10 SEND THE BEGGAR
Tangled With The Error
(Rustproof)
- 11 SKILLET
Hey You, I love Your Soul
(Forefront)
- 12 SIXPENCE NONE THE RICHER
Movin' On (Squint)
- 13 POCKET CHANGE
I Have Decided (Liquid Disc)
- 14 VALUE PAC
Homesick (BEC)
- 15 SKILLET
Whirlwind (Forefront)

LOUD

- 1 BLINDSIDE
Invert (Solid State)
- 2 LIVING SACRIFICE
Truth Solution (Tooth & Nail)
- 3 ZAO
Exchange (Tooth & Nail)
- 4 DISCIPLE
My Daddy Can Whip Your
Daddy (Warner Resound)
- 5 SPOKEN
Think For Yourself
(Metro One)
- 6 FRANK'S ENEMY
Hanging On A Tree (Cling)
- 7 NAILED
Dying (Rugged)
- 8 TRAINING FOR UTOPIA
Hands (Solid State)
- 9 ELDER
Peat Bog Man (Bulletproof)
- 10 WARLORD
The Quest (Solid State)

RHYTHMIC

- 1 WORLD WIDE MESSAGE
TRIBE
Reach For Heaven (Warner
Alliance)
- 2 CLOUD2GROUND
Madness For Love (N'Soul)
- 3 PREACHA
Bring Me Joy (N'Soul)
- 4 KIIS
After The Rain (Metro One)
- 5 AJ MORA
Jesus Christ Is Lord (N'Soul)
- 6 SOZO
Color Of Grace (N'Soul)
- 7 OUT OF EDEN
Get To Heaven (Gotee)
- 8 T-BONE
Growin' Up (Metro One)
- 9 LG WISE
Where Do We Go From Here
(Phat Boy)
- 10 TAMMY TRENT
My Friend (Light)

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Sunday 9 PM

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Sunday 4 PM
WITR 89.7 FM
Rochester, NY
Friday 10 PM
WUFM 88.7 FM
Columbus, OH
Saturday 7 PM

Charts reprinted courtesy of the Pure Rock Report, compiled from airplay reports of more than 80 radio stations and programs nationwide. The Pure Rock Report is a biweekly tip sheet for the Christian rock industry. Contact the PRR at (614) 272-6227 or on the World Wide Web at www.netwalk.com/~prp. List of radio reporters provided by Pure Rock Report.

I really liked the last issue of your mag (may/june). I had a little trouble reading the Pure Rock Report. Do you think you could simplify the background a little?

Jeff Gordon

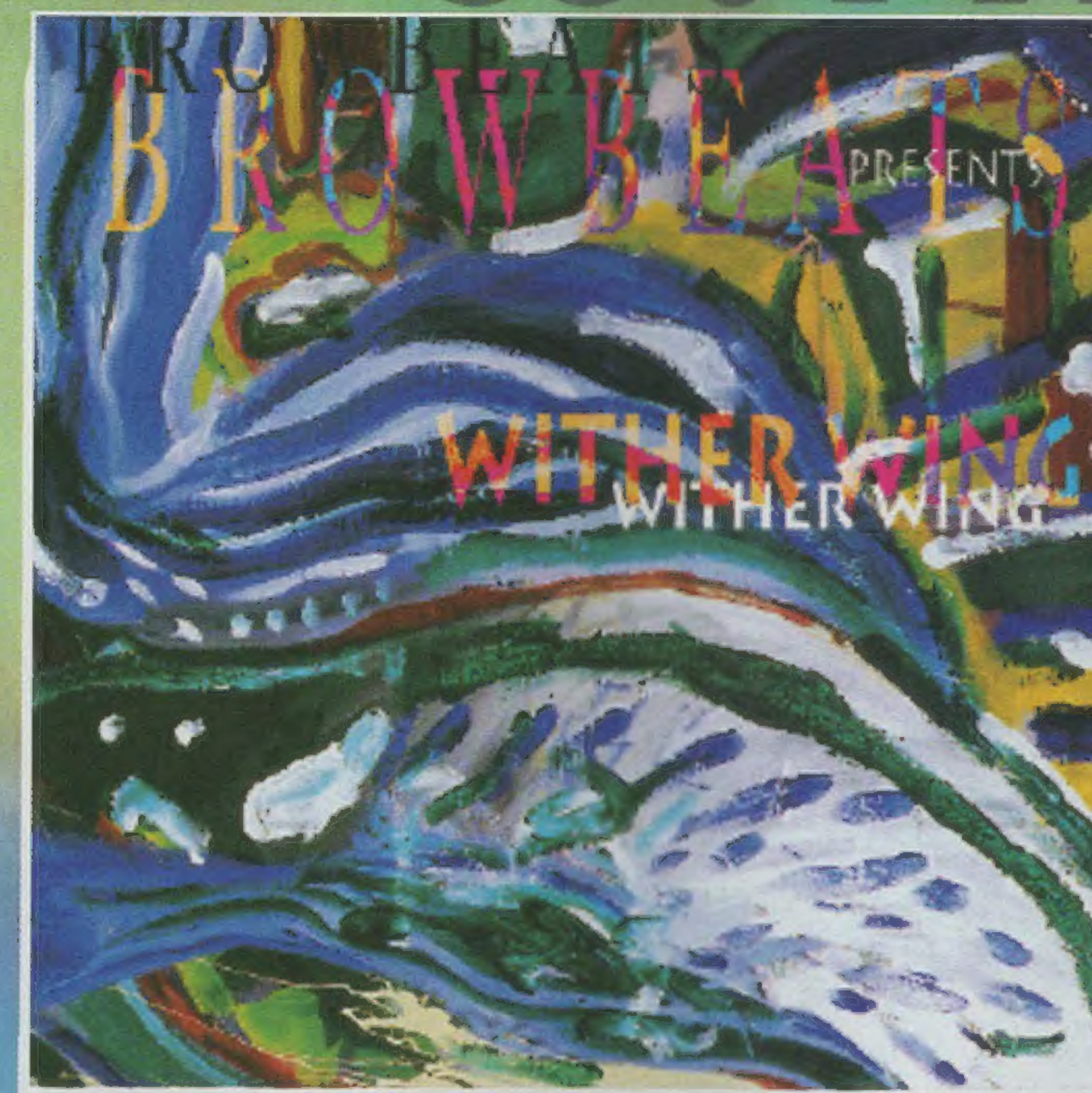
[Jeff, no problem buddy]

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"No Such Thing"
by Chris Well

blah, blah, blah

I think some people are confused. The problem, essentially, is there is no such thing as "Christian music." There is only music and what it's about. Sure, you hear about how big "Christian music" is. Bigger than jazz. Of course, "jazz" refers to what something *sounds* like. When many refer to "Christian music," they're talking about some mutant grouping that includes grindcore and bluegrass and dance pop and southern gospel. * There is no such thing as a "hit" in Christian radio, either. Sure, they say it's something like the fourth largest format on the radio; however, when discussing radio, you're supposed to talk about something specific—talk, modern rock, country, whatever. If you cheat and lump all religious radio together, that technically makes "Christian radio" the *second* largest format—after "non-Christian radio." A "hit" in secular radio means a song gets played a lot on several stations in every city across the country. A "hit" in Christian radio means a song gets played a few times in tiny pockets around the country—but doesn't actually get played coast-to-coast. * Let's be real: When people talk about the huge strides in Christian media, they're not talking about one true format. While everyone else plays by the rules of style—country, pop, talk, whatever—the only thing linking Christian products together is that we all claim to serve the same Lord. □ Which isn't all bad. After all, we are finite; God is infinite. He is bigger than any one person, one church, one denomination, one nation. It's natural—and healthy—we would express our worship in so many ways. The sad corollary is some of us forget how big God is, thinking quite mistakenly, that our form of worship is somehow more godly than others (Mark 9:38–41). * The good news is that the Christian arts community has so many possibilities: Every genre, every style, every media needs to be claimed—or reclaimed—to glorify God. Christian artists should be free to express the wholeness of God's sovereignty—with depictions of our frailties and losses as well as songs about His strength and His victories. We need to stop judging Christian art by the externals, instead testing the spirit behind it (1 John 3:1–3). * Likewise, Christian artists should not abuse this freedom—be human, but also godly (Eccl. 7:15–18). * The example our Lord gave us was to hide truth within stories—His own disciples didn't always understand them. We need to stop asking Christian artists to make everything so easy to understand—it only makes the "art" less Christ-like. * Meanwhile, there will always be those who fail to understand. They will always mistakenly believe there is such a thing as a single "Christian art." They will continue to refer to Point of Grace and Sandi Patty as "Christian rock" and continue to peddle the myth of the Christian "hit" (Matt. 10:16). * If you have a good Christian radio show or station in your area—several are listed with the *Pure Rock Report* charts in this magazine—support them. Don't wait until they're gone to appreciate them. There are others who have exciting new examples of Christian art, too: the multimedia *Actual Reality* [www.actreal.com]; the computer-animated *VeggieTales* [www.veggietales.com]; the dramatic comic *Archangels* [www.4eternal.com]; the Online Christian music mag *RIM* [www.ricochetmusic.com]. Our sister magazine, *Release*, features the buzz artists and fresh voices in Christian pop and dance music, also heard on the *Release* cassette series (ask for it at your local Christian retailer—without good Christian radio, this is one of the few outlets to hear the new music). □ Yeah; there is something frustrating about all those who consider Christian media to be some one-size-fits-all monolith. But once you dig at the truth—there are some cool things that reach out to us in our individual-ness. We are small and He is big. Very, very big. Praise the Lord for all of the possibilities He's given us to express that. 7



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artists



Jars of Clay



Third Day



Steven Curtis Chapman



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delirious?

